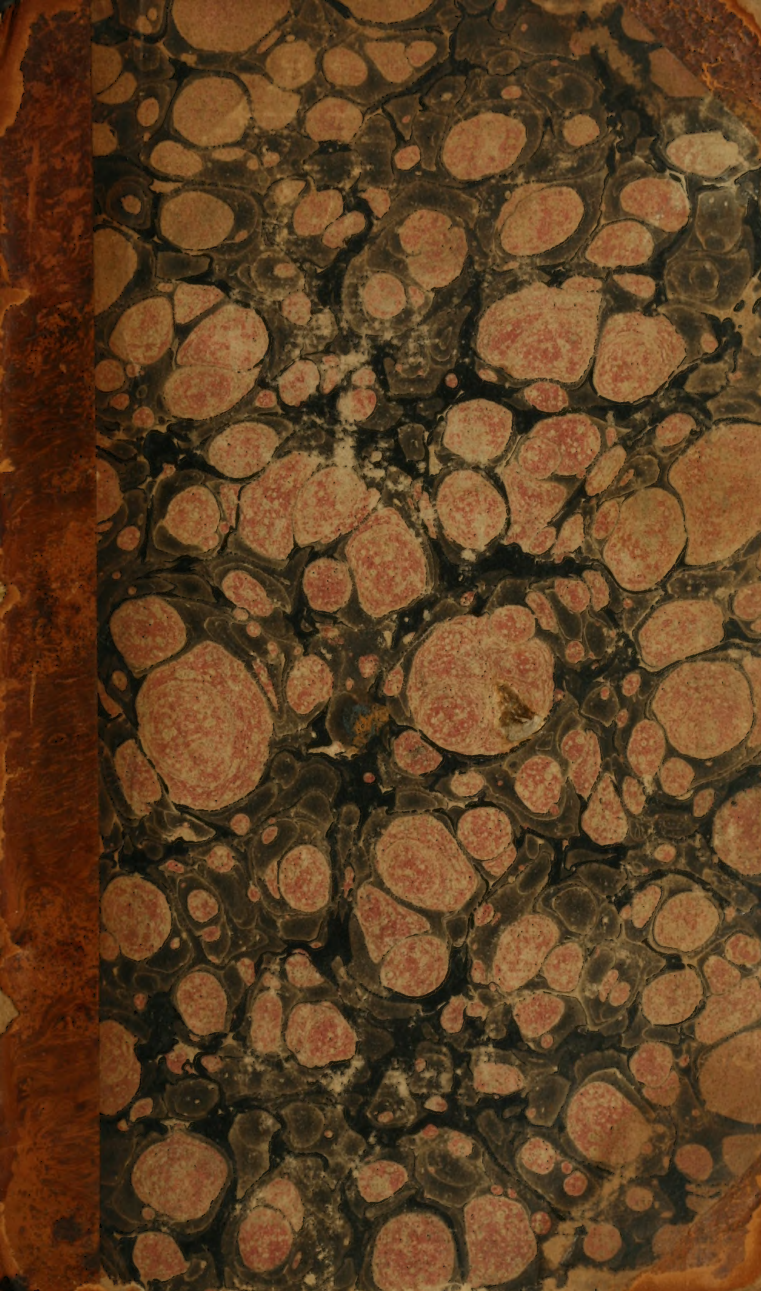




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THE CHRONOLOGY
OF
Our Saviour's Life,
OR
AN INQUIRY INTO THE TRUE TIME
OF THE
BIRTH, BAPTISM, AND CRUCIFIXION,
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

BY THE REVEREND C. BENSON, M.A.

OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Author of an INQUIRY into the Sacrament of BAPTISM.

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1819

TO THE
REVEREND JOHN KAYE, D.D.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY,
AND
MASTER OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE,
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

THE FOLLOWING WORK

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

AS

A GRATEFUL MEMORIAL OF ESTEEM AND ADMIRATION

FOR HIS TALENTS AND VIRTUES

BY HIS

MUCH OBLIGED AND VERY SINCERE FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

THE Author begs leave to express his thanks and acknowledgements to the Syndics of the University Press for their kindness and liberality in undertaking to defray the expence of printing the following work.

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CHAP. I.

Nature and Importance of the Inquiry.

IN opening the volume of the New Testament to peruse the historical records of our Saviour's life, one of the first inquiries we naturally make is into the period which the gospel history occupies ; into the true time of the birth, baptism and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. And this is an inquiry to which we are alike prompted by the curiosity, the difficulty, and the importance of the subject.

Whatever be the feelings with which we contemplate the rise and progress of Christianity ; whether we believe the religion of the Gospel to be true or false, it is impossible to regard its rapid increase, its continued stability, and the mighty moral effects which it has every where produced, without acknowledging it to be a wonderful, if not a divine thing. That an illiterate peasant, without the advantages of leisure or education, should form in his mind the conception of a

religion, which has been found capable of accommodating itself to the manners and customs of the most distant and dissimilar people, and of flourishing under every system of civil government and ecclesiastical polity—of monarchy and republicanism, of presbyterianism and episcopacy;—that this illiterate peasant should then, without the influence of rank and power, have been able to plant and propagate his religion, in direct opposition to the prejudices of his countrymen, the scepticism of philosophy and the opinions of mankind; and that this religion thus inauspiciously begun should have triumphed over every other mode of worship and form of belief, and still continue to maintain its ground without any visible signs of external danger or internal decay; *these* are circumstances so contrary to the general experience of the world, that they cannot fail to excite in the most sluggish minds a mingled feeling of astonishment and admiration, and make every thinking man most anxiously inquisitive into the minutest particulars connected with the author of so singular a work; and of course, in the first place, into the time in which he lived.

It is more than probable however that if the critic who makes this inquiry be not animated with the faith and zeal of a very earnest Christian, he will either content himself with some loose and

inaccurate conclusions, or else feel the ardour of pursuit checked by the uncertainty of the subject, and shrink weary and disappointed from the painful task. So many are the doubts and difficulties which accompany the investigation of evangelical chronology. For there are only two authentic and contemporary sources from which we can draw any circumstantial information concerning the precise time and peculiar manner of our Saviour's birth ; and those are the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. In the first two chapters of each of these we have a detailed account of several circumstances which ought, if accurate, to determine the very year in which the founder of Christianity appeared upon the earth. By a careful examination of these chronological marks, we may indeed easily obtain such a *general* idea of the commencement of the life of Christ, as is sufficient for all the common purposes of history. But if we seek for any thing more than an approximation to accuracy ; if we endeavour by a laborious comparison of sacred with profane historians, to fix the *exact* point of time at which the Son of God condescended to assume the form of man, and suffer for man, we shall meet with several apparent contrarities, and in attempting to reconcile the various authors with each other, have to struggle with real and unexpected difficulties.

For the resolution of every question in critical theology we almost instinctively turn to those numerous and learned writers, who have piously devoted their lives and talents to the exclusive consideration of subjects connected with the revelations of God. And if made in the spirit of humble sincerity, I believe, the appeal will seldom issue in an unfavourable result. In the instance, however, which is now before our view, the case is unfortunately the reverse, and a veil of fatal obscurity seems hitherto to have hung over the chronology of the gospels, which many a hand has attempted, but none been able to withdraw. Upon the birth, and baptism, and death, upon the duration of the life and ministry of Christ, there have been almost as many opinions as writers, and yet no one has been able to give perfect satisfaction either to the world or to himself. After all his labours and all his cares each man has found his own hypothesis liable to some insuperable objections, and the means which he had perhaps successfully adopted to harmonize a variety in one point, have served but to create a more positive and decided contradiction in another.

Now this harrassing uncertainty in the subject itself, and these uniformly unsuccessful efforts to give a clear and unimpeachable chronology of our Saviour's life, are what principally contribute

to establish the importance of our present inquiry.

Perhaps to the real believer and sound Christian—to the Christian who has been duly instructed from his earliest youth to be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him, the great uncertainty which still prevails respecting the true time of our Saviour's birth or death is a matter of very little consequence. The general and solid arguments by which he has been already convinced of the truth of his religion, will most probably support *his* faith under all difficulties. But the case is very different with the unconfirmed Christian, who is wavering perhaps between Deism and Christianity. The accuracy and soundness of our conclusions depend in every thing, but especially in moral and religious questions, where the passions exercise so strong an influence over the judgement, almost as much upon the *order* of our inquiries, as upon their nature and the manner in which they are conducted. Any man, therefore, and any young man especially who commences his investigation of the truth of Christianity, by directing his attention, as is generally the case, to the doubts with which it has been assailed, and the difficulties with which it is in many parts attended, will receive a very improper bias against the arguments by which it may be maintained. For

his first, and therefore strongest impressions, having been those which teach him the possibility of the gospels being false, he will be imperceptibly led to magnify every objection against a system which he cannot but perceive so unrelentingly condemns the indulgence of every passion ; and his impartiality being injured by the frequent contemplation of the weaker parts of its evidence, its very strongest proofs will afterwards descend with less than their due weight into an imagination irritated and pre-occupied with the habit of doubt. Thus to him varieties will appear contradictions, and contradictions be construed into falsehoods, and should he find or fancy the date assigned by St. Luke for the baptism of Christ to be absolutely irreconcilable to other historians, the mistake will seem to his prejudiced understanding to involve the genuineness and authenticity of the whole of the New Testament, and throwing Christianity aside, he will resolve perhaps never again to trouble himself with the difficulties of a system, of the falshood of which he will imagine that he has been thoroughly and rationally convinced.

But whatever be the connection of the present inquiry with the belief of Christians in general, there is one part of that belief which it most materially and undoubtedly affects, and that is

the birth of the Saviour from a pure virgin through the instrumentality of the Holy Ghost.

Upon the difficulty, or as he chooses to consider it, the impossibility of reconciling the account of our Saviour's birth as related by St. Luke with the account of the same circumstance in St. Matthew and the ancient profane histories of that period which still remain, Dr. Priestly^a has contrived to raise his principal argument against the preliminary chapters of St. Matthew, the genuineness of which involves the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Jesus. In this argument he has been closely followed by Belsham, the servile copier of almost all his irregular opinions.

^a Hist. of early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ, Vol. IV. B. iii. c. 20. I have observed that Dr. Priestly *chooses* to consider the difficulty insurmountable, and the chapters spurious; because I find that there are occasions upon which he does *not* choose so to think. In the "Observations upon his Harmony," p. 2, he seems to have forgotten or given up the spuriousness of the two chapters in dispute, and considers an opinion he opposes "as evidently out of the question, *because* according to Matthew our Lord was born before the death of Herod." This argument is of no force except he considered the second chapter of St. Matthew's gospel to be genuine. The difference of sentiment thus displayed is curious indeed, but not unaccountable. The object of the "Harmonist" was of course very dissimilar to that of the "Historian of early opinions." Yet have I not set this down in malice. The illustrious Philosopher has yielded but to the general infirmity of human nature. It is the fate of all to be biassed, perhaps imperceptibly, by preconceived opinions.

In the twelfth page of the "Calm Inquiry,"^b we meet with the following remark. "From Luke iii. 1. compared with ver. 23. it appears, that Jesus was born fifteen years before the death of Augustus, that is, at least two years after the death of Herod, a fact which completely falsifies the whole of the narrative contained in the preliminary chapters of Matthew and Luke." This is his most prominent objection to the immaculate conception. The rest without this are weak and inconclusive, depending upon this as their original foundation; so that if we can once fairly account for those contradictions which appear to exist, and harmonize the relations of the two Evangelists with each other,

^b Nothing can be more calculated to mislead the unwary reader, than the statements of this page. Upon examination it will appear that St. Luke only informs us that Jesus was "about thirty," when he was baptised, (chap. iii. v. 21, 23;) and would seem to imply that he was baptised in the 15th year of Tiberius, (chap. iii. v. 1.). Upon this foundation Mr. Belsham, begging the question, assumes it as *a fact* that Jesus was born "at least two years after the death of Herod." But, even granting the assumed premises of Mr. Belsham, his sweeping conclusion is by no means justified. An error in point of time does not necessarily include an error as to facts, and a writer may be very well acquainted with the circumstances attending any transaction without knowing the precise date of the transaction itself. Though therefore we should admit that the two preliminary chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke are at absolute variance with each other upon the *time* of Christ's birth, we are not logically authorised to conclude that "the *whole* narrative contained in those preliminary chapters of Matthew and Luke is *completely falsified*."

and with the writers of profane history, we shall have done something to destroy his frail and feeble fabric of doubt, and have contributed something to establish a doctrine which, as it has been generally opposed by Socinian writers,^c may not improperly

^c I call them not Socinians from pique or perverseness, nor with any disrespectful intentions towards any body of men, but from principle. I should be sorry to quarrel with any denomination of Christians for the sake of a mere name; but these who believe the simple humanity of Jesus demand the title of *Unitarians* as something more than a mere distinctive appellation, and therefore, though I might act differently in the courtesy of common conversation, I shall always feel it my duty to withhold from them that title in every deliberate publication, so long as I read the following passage in Mr. Belsham's statement of their opinions. "They who believe the proper humanity of Jesus Christ *claim* the title of Unitarians, more especially because they conceive that they are almost the only body of Christians who practically maintain the important doctrine of the divine unity in its full and just extent, and who exclude every creature without exception from every degree of participation in those attributes, works, and honours which reason and revelation ascribe and appropriate to the only God." *Calm Inquiry*, p. 455. It is for this very reason, because they claim it as due to them alone, that I withhold from them the title of Unitarians; and withholding from them *that*, I know not what other to confer upon them, except the title of Socinians. They may not indeed agree with Socinus in every point. Without doubt they are far below him in his exalted notions of the dignity of Christ and the honour due unto his name. But in the one grand leading characteristic, that Jesus Christ was a human being, and had no existence previous to his conception as the Son of Mary, they agree, and in this they differ from every other denomination of Christians. If however they should prefer the name of Humanitarians, I should be most happy to acquiesce in the choice of that or any other distinguishing appellation. But, considering myself to be as
strict

be considered as in some measure subversive of the Socinian scheme.^d

strict a believer in the Unity of God as either the Preacher or the hearers of the Chapel in Essex Street, I should feel it inconsistent with what I owe to the establishment and to myself to allow to any set of men the exclusive use and right to the name of Unitarians.

^d That the doctrine of the immaculate conception *is* in some measure subversive of the Socinian scheme I should be inclined to suspect, if for no other reason, yet on account of the uniform and great anxiety evinced by many writers of that persuasion to disprove the fact. Dr. Priestly and Mr. Belsham have both laboured with considerable ingenuity to convince their readers that the immaculate conception is a mere point of *Critical Theology*, and that it has nothing to do with the opinions we form concerning the nature of Jesus Christ. "The miraculous conception of Jesus," says Mr. B. "would no more infer his pre-existence, than the miraculous formation of our first parents, or the miraculous conception of Isaac, of Samson, of Samuel, and of John the Baptist, would prove that those persons had an existence before they came into this world, and were beings of a superior order to the rest of mankind." *Calm Inquiry*, p. 14. Here I would observe, I. That the original creation of our first parents is not at all a case in point. The whole process of *their* formation is laid before us, and we have in the language of Scripture sufficient grounds for determining that they had *not* any pre-existent nature, or perhaps, I should rather say, no reason whatever to suppose that they had. It is exactly the reverse with regard to our Saviour, in favour of whose pre-eminence and pre-existence the declarations of the New Testament have seemed to the majority of Christians for eighteen centuries to speak in a manner the most distinct and decided.—II. As to the other instances produced by Mr. B. as analogous to the birth of Christ, it is plain that the writer has confounded the meaning of the words miraculous and immaculate. He first of all erroneously considers miraculous and immaculate as synonymous terms, and then compares the *miraculous* conception of Isaac, of Samson, and of Samuel

But be this as it may, there are other and independent grounds upon which it may be maintained, that the elucidation of the chronology of the Gospels

Samuel with the *immaculate* conception of Jesus ; things in reality very different from each other. For whilst the miraculous conception of Isaac, and of Samuel was effected by the intervention of *natural* means, the immaculate conception of Jesus was effected *without* that intervention. The one was *supernatural*, the other only *preternatural*, and this difference in the nature of the thing will make I apprehend a corresponding difference in the conclusion to which it leads. What then is this conclusion? It must I think be confessed that the Trinitarians have sometimes pushed too far the consequences to be drawn from the fact of the immaculate conception, and have erroneously argued, as if, when that immaculate conception was once admitted, the deity of Jesus, the absolute coequality and coeternity of the Father and the Son immediately followed. But though the immaculate conception may not *alone* afford an irresistible argument in favour of the complete divinity of Jesus, it is yet tolerably conclusive against his mere humanity. For if Jesus was a simple man and nothing more than a simple man, there can be no reason in the world why he should not also have been a *proper* man, that is, begotten according to the common laws and order of generation. His extraordinary *mission and character*, like those of Samson or of Samuel, might be sufficient to account for the extraordinary circumstances which accompanied his *birth*, its proclamation by Angels and annunciation by a Star ; but nothing less than an extraordinary *nature* can give a satisfactory reason for the extraordinary method of his *conception*. If therefore we insist upon the simple humanity of Jesus, and at the same time allow the truth of his immaculate conception, we should seem to throw upon the Deity the imputation of having wrought, for no visible purpose whatever, a miracle unique in its kind, and extremely difficult in its proof, a miracle at once singular and unnecessary. In one word a different manner of conception indicates a different nature in the being conceived, and if Jesus was born of a pure virgin he must have been distinct from every

is worthy of all the attention it has hitherto received. To preserve a general resemblance to the scenes and period in which the actions they record are laid, is a quality at once common to the Poet and Historian, to the writer of fiction and of truth. The *leading* features of any time, or place, or characters, cannot be mistaken, and may easily be preserved. But to extend the likeness to the minuter particulars is beyond the power of the most careful inventor, and intentionally to insert an apparent contradiction which it would demand the labour of centuries to remove is more than can be expected even from the most finished artifice.

every common man. Hence it appears that though the inferences, to which the doctrine of the immaculate conception leads, are not so precise as to decide the minor controversy which subsists between the Arian and Athanasian Creeds, they are quite definite enough to enable us to determine the great point against the scheme of the Humanitarians. Resting his opinion upon the numerous declarations of Holy Writ, the Arian or Athanasian, may maintain the angelic or divine pre-existence of Christ, even though he could be proved *not* to have been conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of a pure virgin. But when coupled with that immaculate conception and birth, those deductions obtain additional weight. The immaculate conception is a collateral and corroborative argument for the pre-existence of Jesus and his superiority to the rest of mankind. But whoever maintains the simple humanity of Jesus, must needs deny this immaculate conception, for in admitting the fact, he admits what is a strong presumptive argument against the truth of his theory. Humanitarianism and the immaculate conception are scarcely compatible with each other, a different method of conception usually indicating, as I have before observed, a different nature in the being conceived.

Such a proceeding would infallibly defeat the object of imposture which necessarily aims at *immediate* success. Whoever therefore shall be able to point out the method by which the harmony between the narratives contained in the two opening chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke may be clearly established, and the dates which they have separately assigned to the birth and baptism of Jesus be shewn to correspond with the dates assigned by the Roman and Jewish historians to the events with which they are connected, will have conferred an essential benefit upon Christianity and mankind, by precluding the use of a very favourite objection to the accuracy of the Evangelists, and affording at the same time one of the strongest examples of minute resemblance and undesigned coincidence.

Animated then by a sense of the united difficulty and importance of the chronology of our Saviour's life, I shall now proceed to lay before the reader the result of inquiries which with many necessary interruptions have occupied much of my attention for several years, in the humble hope of giving some degree of satisfaction to every Christian, and perhaps of becoming, through the blessing of God, the instrument of confirming the fluctuating faith and removing the sceptical prejudices of some inexperienced but inquisitive mind. But should my endeavours to ascertain the true

time of the birth, baptism, and crucifixion of Jesus be found upon examination unfortunately unsuccessful, I shall not after all my labours, and all my care, feel ashamed to confess that I have failed in that which so many men of greater talent and perhaps of greater industry have attempted in vain.



CHAP. II.

The Vulgar Era, and the Death of Herod.

THE Vulgar Era, at the 1819th^e year of which we have now arrived, is decidedly wrong, and has evidently been formed upon partial views and unsound principles. For by fixing the birth of Christ to the 25th of December in the 753rd year of Rome, it can scarcely be made to agree with any of the other dates with which we have been furnished either by St. Matthew or St. Luke.

From St. Luke himself it may be probably inferred, and by St. Matthew (ii. 1.) it is both expressly asserted and circumstantially implied, that Jesus was born “in the days” and before the death of “Herod the king;” and under that name the Evangelists undeniably referred to Herod the Great, the duration of whose life and reign it is impossible to extend beyond the conclusion of the 751st year of Rome. The truth of this will

^e Written in the month of August, 1818.

be made satisfactorily to appear in the progress of the inquiry. But, according to the hypothesis of the vulgar era, the birth of Christ did not occur till the conclusion of the 753d year of Rome, a considerable time *after*, instead of before the death of Herod. The inaccuracy of the vulgar era is therefore sufficiently evident, but it will be found upon examination to be no easy matter to correct the error which has been thus proved to exist. One thing however is plain, that, if the two preliminary chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke be admitted as genuine, every system of evangelical chronology which does not regard the birth of Christ as previous to the death of Herod is radically and thoroughly defective. For my own part, convinced as I am after the most mature deliberation of the genuineness of those chapters,^f I cannot but consider a knowledge of the time of

^fThe genuineness of any portion of a work, whether sacred or profane, is best and most satisfactorily determined by the balance of *external* evidence—by the testimony of manuscripts, versions, and quotations or references in subsequent authors. Internal evidence ought to be very strong indeed before it is permitted to countervail a conclusion legitimately drawn from the sources I have just mentioned; and upon this ground alone, upon the preponderating mass of evidence in favour of the genuineness of the first two chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, I should steadily resist the operation of the Socinian pruning knife. It is upon this ground alone, that 1 John, chap. v. verse 7, can have been given up by any divines of the established church, and I do not see why a similar course of reasoning should not apply affirmatively as well as negatively.

Herod's death as the point upon which the whole question turns, and shall therefore proceed to lay the first foundation of the following work in as precise a determination of that much disputed date, as the nature and difficulty of the case will permit.

No approximation, sufficiently accurate to be useful, can be obtained as to the year of Herod's death, from estimating his supposed age at the time. For though it is known that he was about 70 years old when he died, yet there is a considerable degree of uncertainty as to the period of his birth,^s and after all, our infor-

^s I have made many fruitless attempts to remove the uncertainty and ascertain the date of Herod's birth. The difficulty is rendered insurmountable by a false reading in that passage of Josephus, upon which our conclusions depend. In one place Josephus informs us that Herod was constituted governor of Galilee when very young, and in another he limits his expression by stating that he was then about 15 years of age. Now it is universally allowed that Herod was appointed governor of Galilee in the consulship of Calvinus and Vatinius v. c. 707. $v. c. 707 - 15 = 692$ and $692 + 69 = 761$. He was of course therefore, according to this computation, born about the 692d, and died about the 761st year of Rome, 10 years later than we should be led to suppose by every other mode of calculation. To remove this discrepancy it has been conjectured that we ought to read 25 instead of 15 years in the preceding passage of Josephus, and thus fix the birth and death of Herod 10 years earlier than before, his birth about v. c. 682, his death v. c. 751. This new reading may be defended by many irresistible computations. But still the weight of MS. testimony is decidedly against it, and it does not therefore follow

mation with respect to his age is not sufficiently definite to yield any precise result.

If any certainty, therefore, is to be gained upon the subject, it must be derived from a comparison of the duration of his *reign*, with the time of its commencement, as stated by Josephus; for if once we give up our reliance upon the authority of that historian, there is an end to the inquiry, and we have no longer any solid foundation upon which to rest a single argument.

Now Josephus expressly informs us^h that Herod began his reign when Calvinus and Pollio were consuls at Rome, Pollio for the first and Calvinus for the second time. Upon the authority of Pagiⁱ and others this consulship may be considered as beginning on the first of January and ending on the 31st of Dec. J. P. 4674. Within that period, therefore, we must seek for the commencement of Herod's reign.

in the present stage of the argument that it is so undeniably correct as to be made the basis of other calculations. We must not presume to say 25 is the true reading, and upon that assumption proceed to determine the date of connected events. We must rather first of all determine, by other means, the dates of those connected events, and from those determined dates deduce the propriety of the conjectural reading. It is one of the results, not one of the premises of our argument.

^h Antiq. Jud. lib. xiv. cap. 26.

ⁱ Pagi Dissertatio Hypatica seu de Consulibus, p. 192.

This period may be still farther reduced, and the commencement of Herod's reign fixed to the *latter* half of the 4674th year of the Julian Period by a consideration of the circumstances which occurred between the battle of Philippi and the nomination of Herod to the kingdom of Judea.

The battle of Philippi was fought in the October of the 4672d year of the Julian Period. After that battle Anthony went into Asia and there conferred upon Herod and Phasael the title and authority of tetrarchs of Judea.^k We may conceive, therefore, that this appointment took place in the latter part,¹ say December, J. P. 4672. In the *second* year *after* this event Pacorus the Parthian invaded and took possession of Syria, Dec. 4672 + 1 = Dec. 4673, which is therefore the *earliest* date that can be assigned for this invasion of Syria; but it most probably took place early in the spring of J. P. 4674, the time universally chosen by the ancients for the commencement of their military operations.

After the pentecost^m which immediately followed that invasion, that is, after the pentecost on the ninth of Juneⁿ J. P. 4674, Herod fled from

^k Antiq. lib. xiv. cap. 22, 23. compared with de Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 11.

¹ Lamy. Appar. Chron. Part I. cap. v. §. 3.

^m Antiq. Jud. lib. xiv. cap. 24. p. 495. A. and B.

ⁿ Lamy. App. Chron. Part I. cap. vi. p. 31.

Jerusalem to Rome, where he was appointed king of Judea by the Senate; and since we have already seen from Josephus that his appointment to that dignity took place *in* the year J. P. 4674, it is evident that the commencement of Herod's reign must be dated from some period between the 9th of June and 31st of December of that year. Various other circumstances are mentioned which would enable us to contract these limits still further, and perhaps to fix with precision the commencement of Herod's reign to the month of *July* J. P. 4674.^o But as the more extended period which

^o The circumstances which might enable us to fix the commencement of Herod's reign to the month of July, J. P. 4674. are the following, 1. Josephus positively states that Herod began to reign in the 184th Olympiad, καὶ ὁ μὲν οὕτως τὴν βασιλείαν παραλαμβάνει τυχὼν αὐτῆς ἐπὶ τῆς ἑκατοστῆς καὶ ὀγδοηκοστῆς καὶ τετάρτης Ὀλυμπιάδος, ὑπατεύοντος Γαίου Δομετίου Καλουίνου τὸ δευτέρον, καὶ Γαίου Ἀσινίου Πωλίωνος. Ant. lib. xiv. cap. 26. p. 499. F. 2. It is equally certain from the same historian, that Herod did not quit Jerusalem for Rome, where he was appointed king, until after the Pentecost, J. P. 4674. The Pentecost took place on the 9th of June and the 184th Ol. ended in July, J. P. 4674. Therefore if these notices of Josephus be correct, Herod was appointed king about July, J. P. 4674. But the correctness of these notices has been doubted and even denied by many, who hold it to be impossible that Herod could have reached Rome, considering the route he took and the delays he met with, before the month of September. I am staggered but not convinced by their arguments. I am informed by Pliny, N. H. l. xix. Rodm. that C. Balbillus sailed in six days from the Streights of Messina to Alexandria, and I find that I can allow thrice that length of time for the similar voyage of Herod from Egypt to one of the southern ports of Italy, and still date the commencement of his reign within the requisite period, and *before* the conclusion of the 184th Olympiad.

I have stated above will be found sufficiently accurate for all the purposes of the present inquiry, I should be unwilling to detain, and perhaps confound the reader by a more particular discussion.

The commencement of Herod's reign then is to be dated from the summer or the autumn of J. P. 4674; and he reigned according to Josephus 37 years^p after he was declared King by the Senate of Rome, that is, he did not reign less than 36 nor more than 38 years.

July J. P. 4674, the *earliest* commencement of Herod's reign, +36 years its *shortest* duration = July J. P. 4710. Dec. J. P. 4674, the *latest* commencement of his reign, +38 years, its *longest* duration = Dec. J. P. 4712. The month of Dec. J. P. 4712 is therefore the *latest* period to which we can assign the death of Herod, and July J. P. 4710 the *earliest* by the same method of computation. The former of these conclusions, which fixes the death of Herod *before* the end of Dec. J. P. 4712, has been universally allowed. To the latter, which upon precisely the same grounds attributes the same event to a period *subsequent* to July 4710, it is strange to say that considerable opposition has been raised; and simple and unex-

^p Antiq. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 10. de Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 21. p. 773. G.

ceptionable as the method of calculation undoubtedly is, it is only on account of the authority of the names by which the contrary opinion has been supported that I think it necessary to give to their arguments any minuteness of examination.

It is certain that Herod was alive on the 13th of March J. P. 4710. This may be undeniably proved from the testimony of Josephus, combined with one of the most unequivocal of all chronological marks, the astronomical calculation of an eclipse of the moon.

Herod had erected over the gate of the temple at Jerusalem a golden eagle. This illegal image gave great offence to the Jews in general, and to the Rabbis in particular, two of whom Judas the son of Sariphæus and Matthias (the most celebrated teachers of their day) exerted all their eloquence to excite the zeal of their scholars to destroy this abomination. Aided at length by a false report that Herod was either dying or dead, their persuasions prevailed, and a number of young men ventured upon the perilous enterprise of pulling down the eagle at mid-day. In the midst of their undertaking they were disturbed by the guards of Herod, who secured about forty of them, and carried them before him. Having made himself acquainted with the circumstances of the case, Herod burnt

both them and the Rabbis. "That very night, adds Josephus, there was an eclipse of the moon."¹

This eclipse has been almost universally decided by the best writers upon the subject to be that which occurred on the night of the 13th of March J. P. 4710, and hence it necessarily follows that on the 13th of March J. P. 4710 Herod was alive.

The passover of that year is computed to have fallen on the 11th of April,² and it is certain from the tenor of Josephus's narrative that Herod died no long time before *some* passover. It is also plain, from the report which prevailed that Herod was either dying or dead, on the 13th of March J. P. 4710, that his disease had made *some* progress at that time. The question therefore to be determined is, whether Herod's death took place before the passover *next after* the 13th of March J. P. 4710; that is, *between* the 13th of March and the 11th of April, J. P. 4710; or whether he did not continue under his disease until a short time before the passover J. P. 4711 or J. P. 4712. Lardner, without pretending absolutely to determine the

¹ Antiq. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 8. p. 597. E.

² Lamy. App. Chron. Part I. cap. viii. p. 58. §. 5.

point, seems evidently to favour the former opinion, which, contrary to our calculations correctly formed upon the express testimony of Josephus, fixes the death of Herod previous to the passover, J. P. 4710; and as his arguments,^s condensing the whole of what can be advanced in favour of that opinion, have been pretty generally relied upon, I shall give them a full and mature consideration.

Lardner's first objection to fixing the death of Herod later than the passover, J. P. 4710, is founded upon the supposition that "his disease had made so great a progress" before the execution of the Rabbis on the 13th of March, that it is perfectly incredible he should live a year after that time; and this idea he rests, 1st, upon the report which was spread by the Rabbis that Herod was dying or dead; 2dly, upon the description which Josephus gives of his disease.

In answer to this we may observe, 1. That the execution of the Rabbis followed very closely upon the sending off the ambassadors concerning Antipater to Rome,—that it was not till *after* those ambassadors were sent off that Herod's distemper seized him *at all*, and that Josephus himself expressly states that the complaints of Herod did

^s Lardner, Credib. Vol. I. Appendix. §. 4.

not assume a serious aspect, or seize upon his *whole body* until *after* the execution of the Rabbis, and consequently his disease could *not* “have made so great a progress” *before* that time.¹ 2. That the report of Herod’s being dying or dead was false and known to be so by those who propagated it. 3. That popular reports so frequently arise from the most trivial causes, that in very few instances indeed do they afford a solid foundation upon which to build any material conclusion, and that least of all can they afford it in such cases as that which is now before us, because the rumour may here be undeniably traced to the wish of the Rabbis to promote the idea of Herod’s danger or death, in order the more easily to induce their scholars to pull down the golden eagle.

Not much more dependence can be placed upon the *description* which Josephus has left us of Herod’s distemper. Herod indeed almost despaired of recovery from the very first, but that was on account of his extreme age. I say he *almost* despaired of recovery, because it will afterwards appear^u that he did not become entirely hopeless until his return from Callirhoe.

¹ Antiq. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 8. p. 595. F. p. 597. E. de Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 21. p. 772. G.

^u See page 34.

He was also brought on a couch to the council, at which the Rabbis were condemned to death, and was unable to stand notwithstanding the new strength he might be supposed to derive from rage. But Josephus informs us that this inability to stand or sit upright arose from the *nature* rather than the extent of the disease, which made it difficult for him to breathe when in an upright posture,^v and the very word, which he applies to Herod when labouring under this disease, intimates rather a gradual wasting away of the vital powers, than the rapid progress of a violent disease.^w

2. Lardner observes, in the second place, that if we suppose Herod did not die till a short time before the passover, J. P. 4711, then, since the ambassadors who were sent by Herod to Rome concerning the conduct of his son Antipater, were sent off *before* the execution of the Rabbis, that is, before the 13th of March, J. P. 4710, but did not return till a short period before Herod's death, that is, upon this supposition before the passover, J. P. 4711, they must have been at

^v Antiq. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 8. p. 595. G. p. 597. G. πνεύματός τε ὀρθία ἔντασις, καὶ αὕτη λίαν ἀηδὴς κ.τ.έ. The word ὀρθία is somewhat ambiguous, but has, I conceive, been rightly translated by Sir Roger L'Estrange, and referred to Herod's breathing when he sat upright.

^w De Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 21. p. 772. B. οἱ τότε τὸν βασιλέα πυνθανόμενοι ταῖς ἀθυμίαις ὑπεκρέοντα καὶ τῇ νόσῳ.

least a year in going from Judea to Rome and back again upon the most urgent business; which is a thing altogether incredible.

Lardner has here fallen into a slight mistake. The ambassadors did not return at all before Herod's death. They merely sent letters* containing the judgement of Augustus upon Antipater's fate. The objection therefore resolves itself into an inquiry whether there be any improbability in supposing the decision of a difficult and important case to have been deferred for a considerable time at Rome. Now though the business of the ambassadors was urgent and of great consequence both to their sovereign and themselves, yet it was by no means so to Augustus. Antipater he knew was in custody, and whatever he determined would be executed, whether he determined immediately or not. Besides to give the power of death to a father over his son, though a power possessed by every Roman citizen, was a matter, under the circumstances of the case and in the situation of the parties, of such importance as to require the most serious and mature deliberation. It was not a point upon which Augustus would be anxious hastily and carelessly to decide,^y and we may

* De Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 21. p. 773. D.

^y There are one or two passages in Josephus which distinctly state the disinclination of Augustus to give Herod the power of putting his son to death.

therefore suppose that the case would be investigated and considered in all its bearings and at full length. This could not be done immediately. Form would occupy a considerable portion of time, and the other and more important concerns of the empire might delay to an indefinite period the decision of the Emperor, however anxious and pressing either Herod or his ambassadors might be. For the case involved in it the *previous* determination of Acme's guilt, (the servant of Julia and accomplice of Antipater,) whose trial would of course proceed in the regular manner in the regular courts of law. The conclusion of these preliminary proceedings must therefore be waited for before any thing could be done. The case was also in itself of extreme intricacy, having already cost Herod the labour of more than seven months in the collection and arrangement of the accusations and testimonies. So large and voluminous a mass of evidence could not be comprehended at a single glance. It should be remembered also that experience is in favour of the lapse of a long period of time before the determination of the case, and that there is one instance upon record, in the Acts of the Apostles, of the appeal of a Roman citizen to the Emperor, in which the appellant St. Paul was permitted to remain "two whole years"¹ a prisoner, without a hearing, or at least without any

¹ Chap. xxviii. verse 30,

final decision of his appeal. Granting then that for the mere purpose of a journey from Judea to Rome and sending back dispatches from thence, a year may be too much to allow ; still we would suggest that where business is to be done in any place, business the completion of which depends upon others, and not upon ourselves, upon an individual over whom we have no controul, and that individual an emperor harrassed by the affairs of almost all the world, there is no means of knowing how long these ambassadors might be detained. If too, as is most probable, there were many of the forms of courts and of law to be gone through before the condemnation of Acme could properly be determined upon and the case obtain a hearing at all from the Emperor, those who have heard or know any thing of law in this or in any country, will be at no loss to think it credible that Herod did not obtain a decision for more than a year. Suppose, what would be a similar, though not perhaps a possible case, that a reference were made upon some disputed point to the Chancellor of England, and, oppressed as is that minister, like the Emperors of Rome, with the united weight of legal and political business, where would be the incredibility of a decision not being obtained for a year, upon a question which had been thus referred from one of our West Indian settlements? After this remark, I think, there can be no necessity to

press further the usual dilatoriness of the proceedings of Kings and Law.

3. Lardner says that the mourning of the Jewish nation for the Rabbis at the passover next after Herod's death was very *fresh*, which it could not have been if the Rabbis had been dead above a year before, which they must have been if executed in J. P. 4710, and Herod did not die till J. P. 4711.

Now it so happens that in the passage quoted from Josephus to prove this assertion I read only that the mourning for the Rabbis was open and loud, but I perceive not a trace of the *freshness* of their grief or of the *recent* occurrence of the event for which they mourned. But open and loud of course their mourning would be, because it was not the voice of real woe, but the affected and clamorous lamentation of men aiming at some revolution in the state,^a and making this popular subject a means of effecting it. It was the semblance of grief assumed for political purposes, but which fear had prevented their assuming before. "The revolutionists" (as Josephus expressly states) "took this occasion to lament Judas

^a Νεωτερίζειν προαιρουμένων, de Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 2.

and Matthias, those teachers of the laws." ^b The loudness and openness of their grief is therefore no proof of the freshness of the event for which it was displayed. It was enough that the cause of it was popular, and whether it had happened one or two years before, the policy which dictated the appearance of grief at all would dictate also the appearance of sincerity—the loudness and openness with which it was testified. No certain inference then can be drawn as to the *recent* occurrence of the execution of the Rabbis even from that very passage which Lardner has produced as a direct proof of the truth of his assertion.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew that the objections by which Lardner and others have laboured to prove the *impossibility* of Herod's living for any length of time beyond the 13th of March, J. P. 4710, are at least not perfectly conclusive.

But at any rate, whether these objections be valid or no, Lardner seems to think it *unnecessary*, and therefore improper, to extend the duration of Herod's life beyond the passover J. P. 4710, because there is a sufficient space of time between

^b Οἱ νεωτερισταὶ τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ἰούδαν καὶ Ματθαίαν ἐξηγητὰς τῶν νόμων ὀδυνώμενοι κ. τ. ε. Antiq. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 11. p. 602. C.

the execution of the Rabbis and that passover for all the circumstances which Josephus has mentioned concerning Herod's illness, death and burial, the execution of Antipater, and the coming of Archelaus to Jerusalem to take possession.

Now we seem already and undeniably to have shewn from the testimony of Josephus himself, that Herod *must* have lived till the month of June at least in J.P. 4710. The only legitimate method of vitiating that conclusion would therefore be, by proving also from Josephus himself that the events he has mentioned between the execution of the Rabbis and the succession of Archelaus *could not* possibly have occupied a larger space of time than is contained between March 13th and April 11th, J.P. 4710. So far however is this from being the case, that upon a careful examination I do really conceive so short a space of time *not* to be sufficient for the occurrence of all the particulars detailed by Josephus.

In supporting my ideas upon this point I have no arguments of Lardner previously to refute, for he has advanced nothing but his own bare assertion, and entered into no calculation of the time requisite for the performance of each circumstance; which is the more remarkable as the truth of his opinion depends altogether upon his correctness

in this particular. It will only therefore be requisite for me to state what these circumstances were,—the order in which they occurred,—and the time requisite for the performance of each, in order to give every one a fair opportunity of judging which opinion is entitled to most credit.

Between the execution of the Rabbis on the 13th of March and the passover on the 11th of April, J. P. 4710 there are 28 days complete, and on the 29th the passover took place. These four weeks will, I think, be much more than swallowed up by the following events.^c

After^d the execution of the Rabbis, Josephus states that Herod's disease assumed a more serious

^c Antiq. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 8, 9, 10, 11. De Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 21. lib. ii. cap. 1, 2.

^d I have marked the word "*after*" in italics, in order to meet by an express contradiction the bold manœuvre of Allix, contending like Lardner, that Herod died v. c. 750, (which it will afterwards appear I do not deny,) but decidedly differing from him in supposing that the various circumstances which I have enumerated in the text could have taken place in so short a space of time as that which intervened between the 13th of March and the 11th of April; Allix takes upon him to assert that some of the most important of these circumstances took place *before* the execution of the Rabbis on the 13th of March. "*Ante illud supplicium Herodes pene moriens ad aquas calidas a Medicis deducitur Callirhoen ultra Jordanum. Cum aquas non posset ferre ipsius infirmum corpus, illum oleo immergunt; quo facto pene animum exhalat.*"

aspect,—that he called in physicians, and followed their various prescriptions,—that at length they recommended him to try the warm baths at Callirhoe,—that in consequence Herod went thither, but reaped little or no benefit,—that as a last experiment he was bathed in warm oil, which had nearly proved fatal, and that he then returned to Jericho, with no hopes of recovery, and in a melancholy state both of body and mind. After his return to Jericho, Josephus proceeds to inform us, that Herod, knowing the hatred which was borne to him by the Jews, sent for the principal men from all parts of Judea, and left orders with his sister Salome that they should be put to death as soon as he himself should breathe his last, and thus make a compulsory mourning amongst his subjects at his decease. After these men had arrived in obedience to his orders, Herod

Desperata salute Hierichuntem reducitur, p. 81, 82. Again p. 94, he treats the objection deduced from the impossibility of so many events occurring in so short a space of time, as if it were founded upon a fallacy, “Peccat in eo objectio quod supponat hæc omnia gesta a die 13 Martii, anni 42 Juliani, (J. P. 4710) quod non necessariò supponendum est; verum consequentia rerum, quæ exceperunt mortem Herodis, ne quidem patiuntur ut dubitemus quin hæc gesta sunt ab initio *Januarii* ad tempus Paschatis anni Jul. 42.” To this arbitrary and unsupported assumption I can only reply that it is altogether contradicted by the words and the tenor of the narrative of Josephus. To be convinced of this it is only necessary to read the 8th chap. of the 17th book of his “Antiquities,” or the 21st chap. of the 1st book of his “Jewish War.”

received letters from his ambassadors giving him the power of putting his son Antipater to death. This intelligence at first revived his spirits, but he soon again fell into a state of despondency and endeavoured to put an end to his own life. Antipater understanding he had succeeded in his attempt, offered a bribe to his keeper for his release, which being repeated to Herod, he ordered him to be immediately executed. Five days after the death of Antipater, Herod himself died at Jericho, and was carried 200 furlongs to Herodium and there buried with great magnificence. His son and successor Archelaus mourned for him 7 days, and then, having first given the customary entertainment to the people, went up to the temple of Jerusalem. Here a violent sedition arose, which as the passover was at hand might perhaps have become dangerous from the vast multitudes then assembled. Archelaus therefore, thought it right at once to quell it by force, and compelled every one to leave the feast. He then set off for Rome.

From this summary of events the following calculations may be made.

I. Archelaus having buried his Father at Herodium mourned for him 7 days, and then having given a very expensive funeral feast to the multitude he went up to the temple of Jerusalem

and made great promises to the people. Here are eight days at least unequivocally mentioned; of these Archelaus mourned 7 and then, how soon after is not stated, but on the 8th at the soonest he entertained the people, and went up to the temple. To these 8 days we must I think without doubt add the time consumed in the extensive and magnificent preparations for the funeral of Herod; for it is sufficiently plain from the following passage of Calmet, that the mourning did not commence till after the burial of the deceased. "As soon as the corps is carried forth, they double the cloth on the floor, fold up his bed-clothes which they leave on the matt, and place a lighted lamp on the head board which continues burning during the seven days of mourning."^e Reckon now, what is incredibly short for a royal funeral,—reckon but two days for the preparations and suppose that on the third day Herod was carried and interred at Herodium, and that the mourning of Archelaus commenced from that day, and we shall then have three more days to add to the preceding, $8 + 3 = 11$, and we thus obtain 11 days between Herod's death and the passover.

II. It was towards the evening of the day on which Archelaus went up to the temple, that the

^e Calmet's Dissertation on the Funerals of the Hebrews, Book iii. Diss. 11.

seditionous persons before mentioned took occasion to lament the death of the Rabbis, and their continued and excessive lamentations soon excited a general tumult. How long this tumult lasted Josephus has not stated, but his account would lead us certainly to conclude that it was not immediately quelled. For Archelaus at first endeavoured to quell it by gentle means, and granted what they demanded,—both the punishment of those who had been in Herod's confidence, and the removal of the High Priest whom Herod had appointed,—and also sent several persons in succession to negotiate with and if possible to satisfy the discontented. But all his endeavours failed, and it was evident, says Josephus, that they would not easily be appeased if they could collect any considerable multitude.^f At present therefore, there was not any considerable multitude collected at Jerusalem, but there soon would be and was;—for “about that time the feast of the passover being at hand”^g an innumerable multitude from all parts assembled themselves at Jerusalem for religious purposes. The ringleaders therefore, continues

^f δῆλοι τε ἦσαν οὐκ ἡρεμήσοντας εἰ πλήθους ἐπιλάβοιντο. De Bell. Jud. lib. 11. cap. ii. p. 776. B.

^g Ant. Jud. lib. 17. cap. xi. p. 602. ἐνστάσης δὲ κατὰ τόνδε τὸν καιρὸν ἐορτῆς ἐν ἧ Ἰουδαίῳ αἵμα πρῶτον πατριον. De Bell. Jud. lib. 11. cap. ii. p. 776. καὶ δὴ τῆς τῶν αἵμα ἐνστάσης ἐορτῆς, κ. τ. εἰ. The account of this sedition is more fully related in the “Antiquities” than in the “Jewish War.”

Josephus, collected together in the temple, where, having provisions in plenty, they were enabled to remain.^h To reduce them to submission Archelaus sent a small body of men, who were repulsed. Alarmed at length by the increasing danger, he resolved effectually to put a stop to the sedition, and for this purpose employed his whole force, destroyed three thousand of the rioters, dispersed the rest, and having by a proclamation commanded every one to return home, they all departed from Jerusalem, “leaving the feast ;”—which of course had not been finished even if it had been begun.

It is plain from the preceding narrative that the sedition was of some duration. It commenced *before* the people had arrived in Jerusalem for the passover, and if we may deduce any general rule from what took place at the passover of our Saviour’s crucifixion, it was customary for them to assemble a few days previous to the feast, which might indeed be naturally expected, as it was necessary both to purchase and keep their sacrifices apart for a short time, in order to see whether they were possessed of all the qualities required in the Paschal sacrifice. The only thing however upon which any certain calculation can

^h σύσταντες ἐν τῇ ἱερῇ τροφῇς ἠνυπορούντο. Antiq. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 11. p. 602. C.

be built is the observation of Josephus that "about that time the passover was at hand." An expression somewhat similar to this in the gospel of St. Lukeⁱ intimates that it wanted two days to the passover, and I am therefore inclined to consider this as referring to a similar or perhaps longer period.^k

Both these circumstances being taken together, I conceive that *three* days can be thought by no one too long, but must by most be regarded as too short a period for the beginning, duration and end of these tumultuous proceedings of the Jews. and since from its being mentioned that they left the feast, it may be concluded that the tumult had ceased either on or before the day of the feast, we shall thus have three days more to add to the

ⁱ Luke, chap. xxii. verse 1, 2, compared with Matthew, chap. xxvi. verse 2, 3, 4.

^k It might be seven days before.—For Josephus says, de Bell. Jud. lib. v. ἀθροίζομένου τοῦ λαοῦ πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἄζύμων ἑορτήν. ὁ γδοή δὲ ἦν Ξανθικοῦ μηνός. "The people were assembled for the passover on the *eighth* day of the month Xanthicus." Now the month Xanthicus is in Josephus but another name for Nisan. μηνὶ τῷ Ξανθικῷ ὃς Νισσαὶν παρ' ἡμῶν καλεῖται. Ant. lib. 3. cap. 10. Hence, as the passover was celebrated on the 15th of Nisan, or Xanthicus, it is evident that the great body of the people was sometimes collected in Jerusalem *seven* days before the passover. Should this be supposed to have been the case on the year of Herod's death, it will strengthen, if it need strengthening, the argument in the text.

preceding eleven, that is, upon the whole *fourteen* days between the passover and the death of Herod.

III. Herod's death was concealed some time by Salome and Alexas. For it was concealed by them until in Herod's name they had liberated those who were imprisoned in the Hippodrome, and sent them to their own estates. After they were gone¹ the death of Herod was publicly made known, and then of course, and not before, did the preparations for his funeral commence. Suppose then the death of Herod to have been proclaimed the very day after it took place, and we have fifteen days between it and the passover.

IV. Herod died on the 5th day after the execution of his son Antipater.^m $15 + 4 = 19$. There were therefore 19 days between Antipater's death and the Passover.

V. Antipater was executed at Jericho after Herod had returned thither from the baths of Callirhoe. How long after it might not be possible precisely to determine, but it was evidently some days after it. For upon Herod's return to Jericho he grew so choleric, says Josephus, as to

¹ De Bell. Jud. lib. 1, in fine.

^m Antiq. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 10, init.

act like a madman, and though threatened with present death, yet he commanded all the principal men of the Jewish nation, wheresoever they lived, to be called to him.^a The whole nation was called, and death was the penalty attached to a disobedience of the letters sent for this purpose. Accordingly a great number came, and as soon as they came were imprisoned in the Hippodrome. A transaction of this nature could not be done in a moment. Suppose now, what is the shortest period that can be allowed for sending dispatches into all parts of Judea and collecting the principal men from every village and town;—suppose that Herod issued this order the very day after his arrival at Jericho, and allow three days for their coming in obedience to it, and these four days, added to the preceding nineteen, will give us twenty-three days from the passover to the return of Herod to Jericho from Callirhoe.

There are still many circumstances to be mentioned which must necessarily have occupied a considerable space of time.

^a Τους γὰρ ΑΦ' ΕΚΑΣΤΗΣ ΚΩΜΗΣ ἐπισήμους ἄνδρας ΕΞ ΟΛΗΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΑΣ συναγαγὼν εἰς τὸν καλούμενον ἱππόδρομον, ἐκέλευσε συγκλεῖσθαι. De Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 21, pag. 773. C. ἀφικομένων προστάγματι τῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰουδαίων ἀνδρῶν ΠΑΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΕΘΝΟΥΣ ΟΠΟΥ ΠΟΤΕ ἀξιολόγων, πολλοὶ δὲ ἐγένοντο ὥς ΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΤΟΣ ΕΘΝΟΥΣ ΚΑΤΑΚΕΚΛΗΜΕΝΟΥ. Ant. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 8. p. 598. B.

The distemper of Herod, it appears from Josephus, did not assume any great degree of severity, or seize upon his whole body till after the execution of the Rabbis. It would also appear from the same author, that before that time Herod had not called in any medical advice. For he mentions it as one proof of the increase of Herod's complaint that he then sent for physicians. They prescribed to him various remedies, but as he still continued in the same or perhaps a worse state, he was carried to the hot baths of Callirhoe, 16 miles from Jericho. These baths were intended as a cure, and not as a charm, and to give them a fair trial in that capacity would require a fortnight or three weeks at the least. They were tried however, and found ineffectual. For as a last resource the physicians recommended the singular experiment of bathing the whole body of the king in oil. The experiment had nearly proved fatal, for the king fainted away in the midst of it, and was thought by all his attendants to be dead. He survived however, but after this he altogether despaired of recovery, and resolved to return to Jericho, which he accomplished, though in such a melancholy state of health as to threaten his immediate death.

Of the whole 28 days between the 13th of March and the 11th of April, there remain but

5 or 6 days at most, for all these various events. For the other circumstances we have perhaps allowed too little, but with respect to these latter I think it will be universally admitted to be directly contrary to all probability to attempt to crowd them into so narrow a space. How it is to be effected I really cannot conceive.

This examination then, instead of leading to the conclusion of Lardner that Herod died *before* the passover on the 11th of April, J. P. 4710, would seem, if correct, positively to refute that opinion, and to prove that Herod must have lived, as before seemed probable, *beyond* the passover, J. P. 4710.

If this be the case,—if Herod *did* survive the passover, J. P. 4710, it would be difficult to say how long he might survive it. We have already seen that Herod's distemper did not increase till after the 13th of March, J. P. 4710. But how long it might have been after that time before it began to increase,—how long or gradually it might continue to increase,—how soon Herod might be sent to Callirhoe,—or how long he might stay there, we have I think no means of determining.—Since, however, we have ascertained from the tenor of Josephus's narrative that Herod must have died a short time, probably not more than

two months before *some* passover, and that he could not have died before the passover, J. P. 4710, we seem authorized to consider the passover J. P. 4711, as the *earliest* period at which that event could have taken place.

It is also the *latest*; for if we suppose Herod not to have died till a short time before the passover, J. P. 4712, it will be impossible to make Dio's account of the banishment of Archelaus agree with Josephus's account of the duration of his reign. We gather from Dio Cassius that Archelaus was banished in the *latter* part of the consulship of Lepidus and Arruntius, or the year J. P. 4719. and Josephus asserts that he was banished at the earliest in the 9th year of his reign.^o But if Herod did not die till a short time before the passover, J. P. 4712, then Archelaus, if banished, J. P. 4719, could not have been banished in the 9th year of his reign, for $4712 + 8 = 4720$, and therefore, J. P. 4719, his 8th year, could not have been completed, and his ninth begun.

We thus seem compelled as it were, to fix upon the intermediate passover, J. P. 4711, as the only one to which the death of Herod can be referred.

^o See Lardner's Credib. Vol. I. Appendix, §. 3.

The very same objection, however, applies, according to some, to the passover, J. P. 4711, which has been already urged against the passover, J. P. 4712. "If Herod," say they, "did not die till a short time before the passover, J. P. 4711, then Archelaus, if banished, according to Dio, in the year, J. P. 4719, could not have been banished as is twice asserted by Josephus in the tenth year of his reign.^p For, $J. P. 4711 + 9 = 4720$, and therefore, J. P. 4719, his ninth year, had not been completed."

If Josephus had been uniform in his statement that Archelaus was banished in the tenth year of his reign, this objection would be possessed of much weight, and I should be the last to controvert the authority of that very excellent historian. But it happens in this, as in several other cases, that there is a difference in his calculations of the duration of Archelaus's reign; and therefore, until we have examined and if possible reconciled that difference, we are not in a condition to be authorised thus broadly to state that, supposing Herod to have died in the beginning of J. P. 4711, the calculations and dates of Dio and Josephus cannot be made to agree.

^p Lardner's Credib. Vol. I. Appendix, §. 4.

But more thoroughly to elucidate and more satisfactorily to remove this difficulty, I would beg leave to lay before the reader the following series of observations.

It is an extremely fortunate, I know not whether I may call it a providential circumstance, that in the "Jewish War" and in the "Antiquities" of Josephus, we have from the pen of the same author two distinct histories of the events which occurred about the time of our Saviour's appearance upon earth. In chronological inquiries this is of particular importance, as we are thus enabled from the expressions of one to correct any erroneous conclusions we might have founded upon the expressions of the other. If the dates are the same in both, our inferences are doubly sure. If they differ, we either account for the difference, or take the medium between them. Now it will generally be found that when Josephus in one of his histories speaks of an event having taken place, say 35 years after a former one, in his other he either speaks of it as having taken place in the 35th or 36th year after that former one. From the two expressions compared together, we are generally enabled to determine whether the 35 years were complete or defective. But in the instance now before us he varies from his general

custom, and whilst in two places^a he informs us that Archelaus was banished in the *tenth* year of his reign, in a third^r he asserts that it was in the *ninth* year of his reign, and not, as we might have expected to have found it written, “after he had reigned nine years.” Instead of examining and endeavouring to account for this deviation of Josephus, in the present instance, from his usual mode, most writers either consider the phrase “in the ninth year of his reign,” as equivalent to the phrase “after he had reigned nine years;” or else, observing that Josephus twice speaks of the *tenth*, and once only of the ninth year of Archelaus’s reign, have concluded without any hesitation that the truth necessarily is on that side on which there is what we may call a numerical preponderance of testimony,—that is to the *tenth* year. It must be evident however to any one—first, that “in the ninth year” cannot naturally mean the same thing as, “after nine years had been completed,” and, secondly, as to the numerical preponderance of testimony, it cannot at any rate lead to a sure inference. If one thing were asserted by an author fifty times, and an opposite thing only once, still as long as the contrariety remained

^a Δεκάτῳ δὲ ἔτει τῆς ἀρχῆς Ἀρχελαίου, Ant. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. 15. βασιλεύοντος Ἀρχελαίου τὸ δέκατον. Vita Josephi, I. p. 998. C.

^r Ἐτει τῆς ἀρχῆς ἐννάτῳ φνγαδένεται. De Bell. Jud. lib. ii.

unexplained, we could not positively say which or whether either of the statements was correct. But if the present difference observable in the different works of Josephus *can* fairly or probably be accounted for by any known principle of calculation in use amongst the Jews, I should apprehend that no one would resist the conclusion drawn from such a principle, whatever it might be. I shall therefore endeavour to point out that principle, and to shew that it is highly probable even from Josephus himself, when thus explained, that Archelaus was banished in the ninth and not in the tenth year of his reign. If that can be done the whole objection will be removed.

The history of the Jewish War was written by Josephus originally in Hebrew, but he afterwards translated it into Greek “for the sake of the subjects of the Roman Empire.”^{*} It is therefore naturally to be inferred that when writing for the subjects of the Roman Empire, he would use such a mode of calculating the reigns of Kings as was intelligible and prevalent amongst the subjects of the Roman Empire. Now the mode of calculating the years of the reigns of Kings amongst the Romans was not from any one fixed period of the year, but from that particular period of the

^{*} Preface to the Jewish War.

year at which they respectively commenced their reigns, whatever it might be. Of this we have numerous proofs in the Roman historians. When therefore in the Jewish War Josephus speaks of Archelaus as having been banished in his ninth year, that work being intended for the use and perusal of the Romans, it would seem only right to interpret the expression *literally*, that is, of his having completed eight years, and entered upon but not completed his ninth. If this be the case our next inquiry is, why in the "Antiquities" and "his own life" the same historian should call the year of Archelaus's banishment the *tenth* of his reign, and upon what principle this latter date may be reconciled with the former. In answer to this, we may observe, that in the first chapter of the Jewish treatise "de principio anni" we meet with the following passage. "Primo die mensis Nisan, *Regum* et festorum principium anni est."^t In the explanation to be given to this passage the commentators are uniform, and declare its meaning to be that the years of the *Jewish* kings (for Gentile kings they had a different mode of reckoning) were always and in every instance to be computed from the first day of the first month Nisan; so that if any king ascended the throne even so late as the eleventh month, Elul, in any

^t Surenhusii Mischna. Pars altera. p. 300.

year, the second year of his reign would still be computed as commencing on the first day of the first month, Nisan, in the succeeding year. If then we suppose that Josephus as a Jew has followed this mode of computation for the reign of Archelaus in his *Antiquities* and *Life*, and the Roman method in his *Jewish War*, we shall find that not only may his own apparently contradictory statements be reconciled to each other, but also to the date of J. P. 4719, which Dio has assigned for the banishment of that prince. For Archelaus, according to our hypothesis, succeeded Herod about the month of February, J. P. 4711, and the passover, or the 15th of Nisan, in that year, fell according to Lamy," on the 31st of March. The second year of Archelaus, therefore, if we follow the Jewish method of computation, began on the first of Nisan, or the 16th of March, J. P. 4711. March 16th, J. P. 4711 + 8 years = March 16th, J. P. 4719. His *tenth* year, therefore, began about that period, J. P. 4719, and ended about the same time, J. P. 4720. If therefore Archelaus was banished any time after the month of March, J. P. 4719, and before the first of January, J. P. 4720, he was banished, according to Dio in the latter part of the consulship of Lepidus and Arruntius, and, according to the Jewish method of

" App. Chron. Part. I. cap. viii. §. 5.

computation, in the *tenth* year of his reign. But this, according to the Roman method of computation, was only the *ninth* year of his reign. For February, J. P. 4711 + 9 years = J. P. 4720. Archelaus therefore, having been banished before the conclusion of J. P. 4719, was evidently banished, speaking literally and after the Roman manner, in the ninth and not in the tenth year of his reign. Thus upon the supposition that Josephus uses the Jewish method of reckoning when he says that Archelaus was banished in the *tenth*, and the Roman when he says that he was banished in the *ninth* year of his reign, it is plain that his calculations may be clearly reconciled both with each other and the assertions of Dio, and that they contain no contradiction whatever to the opinion we have advanced of Herod's death having taken place in the beginning of J. P. 4711.

It may perhaps appear to some that instead of assuming the correctness of Josephus when he says that Archelaus was banished in the *ninth* year of his reign, and endeavouring to reconcile to that supposed correct statement the other passages in which he speaks of his having been banished in the *tenth* year of his reign ; the proper way would have been to reverse this order of proceeding, and assuming his correctness when he says that he was banished in his *tenth*, to endea-

your to reconcile to this the other passage, in which he places his banishment in the ninth year of his reign. This seems to be the proceeding naturally pointed out by that numerical preponderance of testimony in favour of the *tenth* year, of which we have already taken notice,—and I should have felt myself bound to follow this course had it been in my power,—had there in fact been any possible way of reconciling Josephus to himself upon this supposition.—But though there is a method, which I have already pointed out, of shewing why and how he might assign a *greater* number of years to the reign of Archelaus than actually belonged to it, I know of none by which it could be explained how or upon what grounds he could in any instance give to any Jewish reign a *less* than its due number of years. The excess admitting the truth of the lesser number of years may, but the deficiency assuming the greater number of years in Archelaus's reign, cannot be accounted for, and it is for this reason that I have adopted the course already laid down, and by that course, I trust, been enabled at once to reconcile Josephus to himself, to Dio, and to our date for the death of Herod.

Such are the answers which I have been enabled to offer to the several difficulties attending this most intricate point of chronology. What

effect my observations may have upon the minds of others I cannot tell. But this I think is plain,

1. That Herod could not have died before the passover, J. P. 4710, because he could not then have entered upon the 37th year of his reign, according to the express and reiterated testimony of Josephus.
2. That he could not have survived the commencement of the year, J. P. 4712, because, if he did, Archelaus could not have completed the 8th year of his reign, when banished in J. P. 4719.
3. That Herod did die a short time before *some* passover, and consequently must have died a short time before the intermediate passover, J. P. 4711.

The only serious objection to this date arises from the difficulty which it has been supposed to create in reconciling the intimations of Dio and Josephus with regard to the banishment of Archelaus, and had it not been for the existence of that imaginary contradiction, I apprehend it would have received universal approbation. That stumbling-block I have endeavoured to remove by a recurrence to the known and simple fact that in almost every different method of computation the year commences at a different period. Whether by that consideration I have satisfactorily removed it must be left for others to judge. I would be permitted, however, in conclusion to observe, that by the very same mode which I have adopted of reconciling the apparent

variations of historians with regard to the death of Herod, namely, the different periods at which they fixed the commencement of the year, the ingenious and learned author of “*L’art de verifier les Dates*” has very satisfactorily accounted for some seeming contradictions in the annalists, with respect to the year of the death of Charlemagne, and has closed his inquiry with the following remark. “On doit regarder comme suffisamment prouvée la confusion q’avoient jettée dans les Chroniques les differens usages de commencer l’année.”^v

^v Dissertation sur les dates. vol. I. p. 7.

It is to avoid the confusion springing from this cause, that I have adopted the *Julian Period* as the rule of my computations,—“egregiam hanc periodum ;” says Beverege, “quâ nihil unquam in Chronologiâ præstantius inventum fuit.” *Instit. Chronol. lib. ii. cap. 9.* I cannot forbear justifying and recommending the practice I have followed by the strong authority of Petavius, the more to be trusted on the present occasion, because the Julian Period was the introduction of one whom he constantly opposed—of Scaliger. “Magnopere Chronologiæ tyronibus auctor sum, uti Julianam hanc periodum ejusque tractationem et usum sedulò condiscant, certoque sibi persuadeant sine hóc præsidio difficilem et erroribus obnoxiam temporum esse doctrinam ; e contrario vero tutissimam ac facillimam iniri viam si quis eam sibi, quam dixi, periodum præscribat. Itaque nos in toto hóc opere nostro non aliter, quam hâc ipsâ periodo intervalla computamus,” *Petav. de Doctr. Temp. lib. vii. cap. 8. in fine.*

CHAP. III.

THE PROBABLE DATE OF CHRIST'S BIRTH.

SECTION I.

The probable YEAR of the Nativity.

TAKING the correctness of the arguments in the preceding Chapter for granted, we conclude that the death of Herod took place certainly not later than the passover, J. P. 4711, and certainly not before the 13th of March, J. P. 4710, and upon this foundation we must now proceed in our endeavours to determine the date of the birth of Christ.

In the Gospels we meet with no *direct* information as to the year or period of the year at which Jesus was born. We are left to gather it from a comparison of the several circumstances which have been incidentally recorded or alluded to by the Evangelists. The only thing we are expressly told is, that Jesus was born before the death of Herod, "in the days of Herod the king," Matth. ii. 1, and consequently before the passover, J. P.

4711. But this is vague in the extreme. More precisely and satisfactorily therefore to settle the point, we must endeavour to elucidate the following questions :

1. How long the birth of Christ *must* necessarily have preceded the death of Herod.

2. How long it *may* probably have preceded it.

3. Whether this *probable* date corresponds with the other chronological marks in the New Testament. If so, it may then fairly be considered as the true date, or at least as sufficiently correct for the great purposes of a Christian's solicitude, the vindication of his religion from the doubts of scepticism, and the cavils of infidelity.

I. We are to inquire how long the birth of Christ must necessarily have preceded the death of Herod.

When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem from the East to enquire after the King of the Jews, Jesus was already born, and Herod was yet alive. Two points are therefore necessary to be determined before we can ascertain the precise period of Christ's birth, viz. how long the birth of Christ

preceded the arrival of the Magi, and how long the arrival of the Magi preceded the death of Herod.

Let us first examine how long the visit of the Magi preceded the death of Herod.

In the settlement of this point we have no data whatever to guide us, but the actions of Herod at the time, and as they are stated to us in the Gospel. Now these as they are recorded by St. Matthew, chap. ii. would seem to indicate that, when the Magi arrived, Herod was in a perfect state of health both as to body and mind. He was active, he was intelligent. He assembled and would appear also to have presided with spirit and without difficulty at a council of the chief priests and scribes. He privately consulted with the Magi, and gave them the instructions which he thought necessary, promising himself to follow and worship the child;—a promise which he would neither have thought of making, nor been able to perform, had he been in that suffering and emaciated condition to which by his last illness he was soon reduced. In all this he acted with the energy of a man in perfect health and the full possession of the powers of his nature; nor is there one single hint or expression of any thing to the contrary. When Josephus relates the exe-

cution of the Rabbis, he makes several allusions to the feebleness of the king, and carefully states the exertion and difficulty it required for him to attend the council, examine into the sedition and pronounce the condemnation of the guilty. The narrative of St. Matthew on the contrary proceeds with uninterrupted continuity, and contains no intimation which could impress the mind of the reader with the idea that Herod was otherwise than he had ever been; no symptom of weakness, no phrase to mark the writer's astonishment and horror, when relating the massacre of Bethlehem, that though its perpetrator was (to use the language of Josephus upon a similar occasion) μελαγχολῶν ἤδη καὶ μονονουχὶ αὐτῷ τὶ τῷ θανάτῳ ἀπειλῶν, προέκοψεν εἰς ἐπιβουλήν ἀθεμίτου πράξεως.^a Such a remark would have been natural in the mouth of the Evangelist, had Herod at that time been in a declining state. But he has not said any thing at all like it, and hence it would appear highly probable that Herod's last illness had not made that progress when the Magi arrived which we learn from Josephus that it had made at the time of the execution of the Rabbis, on the 13th of March, J. P. 4710. The Magi therefore had arrived before that period.

Again, it may be recollected that Josephus has

^a Josephus de Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 21. p. 773.

told us,^b that the world at large attributed the last disease of Herod to the justice of an offended God visiting him with the most severe and lingering and extraordinary sufferings in consequence of his many and unparalleled crimes. Whether this opinion was right or wrong, I know not. I only say, that it will be difficult for any one who believes the Gospel, to suppose that a cruelty, so unprovoked and excessive as the massacre of Bethlehem, had not a considerable share in the formation of the idea, and consequently that this massacre not only preceded the execution of the Rabbis, but the very commencement of Herod's illness. Now the last illness of Herod did not seize him at all until after the ambassadors were sent off to Rome with the evidence which had been collected relative to the guilt of Antipater, and the departure of those ambassadors stands in the narrative of the historian Josephus as one of the events *immediately* preceding the sedition and execution of the Rabbis.^c These facts being admitted, and I think they cannot be denied, it is evident that the disease of Herod commenced only a short time before the execution of the Rabbis on the 13th of March, J. P. 4710. Yet as it certainly had made considerable progress when that execution took

^b Antiq. lib. xvii, cap. 8. p. 597.

^c Antiq. lib. xvii, cap. 8. in initio.

place, we may be allowed, without being accused of making undue assumptions and as almost all writers have done, to suppose it to have commenced about a month before ; that is about the 13th of February, J. P. 4710. Consequently the Magi having arrived before the massacre of Bethlehem, and the massacre of Bethlehem having taken place before the commencement of Herod's illness on the 13th of February, J. P. 4710 ; the Magi also must have arrived before the said 13th of February, J. P. 4710. I place much reliance on the validity of this reasoning, and can only express my astonishment that amongst all the various writers upon the chronology of our Saviour's life, not one, to my recollection, has bestowed a single thought on the observations upon which it is founded.

The same source, to which we have applied with success for the solution of the last question as to the length of time which must have elapsed between the death of Herod and the arrival of the Magi, will help us also, if not satisfy us, with regard to the length of time which *must* have elapsed between the arrival of the Magi and the birth of Christ.

No one I believe ever read the second chapter of St. Matthew, unbiassed by the influence of any preconceived opinion. without considering the

arrival of the Magi and the birth of Jesus to have been proximate occurrences. I never yet asked the question of any one without receiving such an answer; and the language of the Apostle, one would suppose, could scarce have been so framed as to produce this general impression unless a similar impression had been operating upon his own mind. That the birth of Jesus was a recent event, when the Magi arrived, is indeed evident, from the specific nature of their question, Ποῦ ἐστὶν ὁ τεχθεὶς, "where is he that *is* born?" from the peculiar terms of the demand which Herod made of the chief priests and scribes, ἐπυνθάνετο παρ' αὐτῶν, "ποῦ ὁ Χριστὸς γεννᾶται;" "he demanded of them, where *is*^d the Christ born?" and from Mary being still with her child and husband in Bethlehem. I do not argue so much from the force of any one of these observations taken singly, as from the result of the whole when considered together and in connexion with the context. The question of the Magi would imply only their own opinion

^d Commentators have in my opinion very needlessly laboured to prove that γεννᾶται means or may mean μέλλει γεννᾶσθαι, and ποῦ ὁ Χριστὸς γεννᾶται, "where the Christ *should be* born," forgetting apparently that it seems to have been St. Matthew's intention to imply by the use of the present term, that these were the very words which Herod used. He assembled the chief Priests and Scribes and asked them a question, ἐπυνθάνετο παρ' αὐτῶν. The tenor and terms of the question were these, ποῦ ὁ Χριστὸς γεννᾶται; "Where is the Christ born?"

that Christ was lately born and therefore might be erroneous; Herod's demand was plainly only a deduction from *their* statements; and Mary and Joseph, and the child might have been at Bethlehem, the place of their family though not of their residence, at any other period as well as upon the birth of Jesus. For we know that they came and brought their son with them to Jerusalem every year, and Bethlehem was but a six miles, or two hour's journey, from the capital. Each observation therefore is by itself inconclusive; but when joined, it becomes a very high improbability that so many characters of a recent occurrence, and so likely to mislead, should, if fallacious, have all fallen upon one event, and in the compass of a page. But the most unequivocal mark of all, is in the use of the aorist *γεννηθέντος*, together with the insertion of the word *ἰδοὺ*, in the first verse. The aorist *γεννηθέντος* if alone would be indefinite,^c but when combined with *ἰδοὺ* and compared with

^c Mr. Mann, p. 41. considers the argument deduced from the aorist *γεννηθέντος* as of very little importance, and produces several instances from the New Testament in which the time to which it refers is quite indefinite. But he appears to have overlooked its force when in connection with *ἰδοὺ*. I am not aware that there is any passage in the New Testament in which this union of *ἰδοὺ* with an aorist occurs in an indefinite sense. At least the union most commonly refers to some event which had only just taken place. It is several times used to express the immediate and instantaneous succession of an event to one already mentioned. Matth. iii. 17. and xvii. 5.

the 13th and 19th verses, it is impossible any longer to mistake its meaning. Ἀναχωρησάντων δὲ αὐτῶν (τῶν Μαγῶν) ἰδοὺ ἄγγέλος Κυρίου φαίνεται κατ' ὄναρ τῷ Ἰωσήφ. Again, Τελευτήσαντος δὲ τοῦ Ἡρώδου, ἰδοὺ, ἄγγέλος Κυρίου κατ' ὄναρ φαίνεται τῷ Ἰωσήφ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ. Who ever doubted that the warning to Joseph to flee into Egypt was given *immediately* after the departure of the Magi, or supposed that the divine command to return from thence, was not issued so soon after the decease of Herod, that the intelligence of his death had not had time to reach their place of habitation by the ordinary mode of conveyance? Why then should we needlessly depart from this established rule of interpretation in explaining the exactly corresponding phrase in the former passage? Why should we not hold ourselves bound to consider Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν Βεθλεὲμ ἸΔΟΥ Μαγοὶ ἀπὸ Ἀνατολῶν παρεγένοντο, as subject to the same inference, and implying in the same manner the quick succession of the visit of the Magi to the birth of Jesus. To support us in this deduction we have the express testimony of one of the most ancient Fathers and the oldest tradition which exists upon the matter in the Church. ΑΜΑ γὰρ τῷ γεννηθῆναι αὐτὸν, Μαγοὶ ἀπ' Ἀραβίας παραγενόμενοι προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ. Such is the interpretation put upon the words of St. Matthew by Justin

Martyr^f about the year A. D. 150, and we may suppose, from his positive method of speaking, that the general inference, as well as his own, from the perusal of the whole account was, that the birth of Jesus and the arrival of the Magi were events almost immediately succeeding each other. It is certain however, that at a later period this opinion was renounced by many, and the arrival of the Magi placed nearly two years after Christ's birth, under an idea that the change was imperatively demanded by another passage in the very chapter under our consideration. The argument indeed is not of any material consequence or strength. It is however of sufficient weight to deserve an investigation.

“ Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.” Matth. ii. 16.

If Herod had so diligently enquired the time, it is considered extremely improbable that he should thus unnecessarily send forth and slay all

^f Dial. cum Tryph. p. 303. He repeats the assertion in p. 315. in nearly the same words.

the children from two years old and under, when he must have been thoroughly satisfied, had Jesus been so lately born, that the child he wished to destroy could not have been more than two or three months old.^g To make assurance thus doubly sure, seems, it is said, a wanton and an useless, and therefore an incredible act of barbarity.

In reply to this objection we may observe that the word *διετηρῆς* which is employed by the Evangelist upon this occasion will certainly bear a sense, which would confine the murder of the Innocents to those who had completed their first year alone, and that it is in fact so used by Aristotle, and so explained by Hesychius.^h Having thus reduced the extent of the cruelty one half, there is little if any remaining improbability in the incident; since it would have been difficult if not impossible for Herod to have fixed upon a period less comprehensive with any kind of prospect of attaining his end.

I admit, however, that this answer is not quite satisfactory or decisive. I allow that the word

^g *Ἐνθεν τίνι οὐ φανείται ὅτι ὅτε ἦλθον οἱ Μάγοι, δύο ἦν ἐτῶν ὁ παῖς γεγενημένος*; says Epiphanius *Hær.* 51. cap. ix. p. 431. A.

^h Vide *Poli Syn.* in *Matth.* ii. 16.

ἐστὶν is, in authors both sacred and profane, almost universally used in the sense in which it has been understood in the authorized version of the English church, and as far as I know, by every one of the Christian Fathers. I would therefore observe, in the second place, that the time into which Herod so diligently enquired, was not, and indeed could not have been, the time of Christ's birth, but "the time at which the star appeared;" (Matth. ii. 7.) and that there is no imperative reason against supposing that the star appeared to the Magi, either in continuance, or at intervals, for a considerable time *before* the birth of Christ and their own departure for Judea; during this time they might be employed and detained in meditation upon so singular an occurrence, and in deliberating upon what mode of conduct they should pursue. That this was really the fact appears in a great measure confirmed by St. Matthew, when he says, that Herod extended the slaughter of the infants to those of two years old and under, "according to the time which he had *diligently* enquired of the wise men." If his enquiries were diligent, the answers from the unsuspecting Magi would probably correspond in accuracy, and therefore the inference certainly seems to be, not that Christ was born, but that the star had appeared more than a year before the massacre of Bethlehem.

Perhaps to the greater portion of my readers this second solution of the supposed difficulty will seem perfectly conclusive and just. I would beg leave however to add, for the sake of those who may not feel themselves entirely convinced, the two following considerations: The first is, that Herod might fancy that, as the Magi had already deceived him in not returning to Jerusalem, they were not to be relied upon in their account of the time at which the star appeared; or that the star had not appeared till after the birth of Jesus; or any other notion, however singular and suspicious. The second is, that, however useless and wanton the cruelty, it is not in the present instance incredible. There is no incredibility in attributing to a despot actions which are inconsistent with the dictates of reason, or to a tyrant those which are irreconcilable with the principles of humanity. Herod was both, and besides of a character and nature which cannot be more correctly portrayed than in the language of Josephus. ἐπτόητο δὲ τῷ φόβῳ, καὶ πρὸς πᾶσαν ὑπόνοιαν ἐξεργρίπιζετο πολλούς τε τῶν οὐκ αἰτίων εἵλκεν εἰς βασάνους δεδοικὼς μή τινα τῶν αἰτίων παραλίπη.¹ Upon this timid and suspicious disposition, disappointment was now working in a high degree. Those fears of losing the possession of his throne, which the arrival of the Magi,

¹ De Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 19. p. 766.

had inspired into the mind of Herod, their secret and unexpected departure had greatly increased; and in the emphatic words of the Evangelist he was "exceeding wroth." But "wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous."^k In the moment and madness of vengeance, truth, reason, necessity, consequences, every thing is forgotten. The whole man is wrapt up in one object, all his powers bent upon the attainment of one single end, and he cares not by what means. Hence it frequently happens that angry men not only do what the justice of their cooler moments will most certainly condemn, but what the wisdom of their cooler moments will suggest much better means of accomplishing, and with much less atrocity, a point which human nature is seldom so utterly depraved as entirely to neglect and contemn. Seeing then that Scripture informs us that Herod was "exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under," that is, describes the murder of the Innocents, as the immediate consequence of the only efficient cause of so diabolical a purpose, the rage and disappointment of an infuriate despot; seeing also that it is the characteristic of vengeance to be but little scrupulous as to the nature of the

^k Prov. xxvii. 4.

means it employs, and seeing that this effect of passion would be heightened in the present instance by the peculiar disposition of the man, we need not consider it at all unnatural, or in any degree incredible that the fury and forgetfulness of the moment should induce so irrational a tyrant as Herod to utter such a comprehensive decree of cruelty. In the same spirit in which, though told that the Messiah should be born *in* Bethlehem, he extended the circle of his desolation to “all the coasts thereof” in point of *space*; in the same spirit he might extend the circle of his desolation in point of *time*, to “two years old and under,” though fully convinced from the accurate inquiries he had made, and the accurate information he had received, that Jesus was probably not at that period more than fifty days old. In both cases he acted in perfect conformity with his principles. In both cases πολλοὺς τῶν οὐκ αἰτίων εἵλκεν εἰς βασάνους, δεδουκὼς μὴ τίνα τῶν αἰτίων παραλίπη, and with the knowledge we possess of Herod’s excessive and wanton cruelty upon many other occasions, I should not have been at all surprised if his command had reached to five years instead of two. I do sincerely think therefore that notwithstanding this objection we may very safely believe, what the most judicious in every age have believed, that Jesus was not born any long time before the arrival of the Magi; whose guiding star, being

sent by God to mark with an extraordinary splendour the rise of so extraordinary a personage, as him who had of old been designated under the emblem of the "*Star of Jacob*,"¹ can scarcely with propriety be placed at a period considerably subsequent to the event which it was to celebrate.

We have now seen that the birth of Jesus preceded the arrival of the Magi only by a very short space of time, and that the words of St. Matthew, chap. ii. ver. 16. afford no real or serious ground of objection to this opinion. To this *general* conclusion we must next add an examination of those circumstances which may serve more strictly to define the *exact* period of time which elapsed between the birth of Jesus and the visit of the Magi.

The opinions of the learned world upon this question may be reduced to two; that of those who place the arrival of the Magi a short time before, and that of those who place it a short time after the purification of the Virgin Mary in the temple.

The following are the principal arguments by which those, who maintain, that the arrival of the

¹ Numbers, xxiv. 17.

Magi was *subsequent* to the purification of the Virgin and the presentation of Jesus, have endeavoured to support their conclusion.

“The visit of the Magians must have been *after* the presentation in the temple. If it had been before, and if they had presented their gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh, mentioned Matth. ii. 11. Mary would not have made the lesser offering for her purification, mentioned Luke ii. 23, 24. Nor could the child Jesus have been safely brought to Jerusalem or such notice have been taken of him in the temple, as St. Luke particularly relates, chap. ii. 25, 38, if Herod and all Jerusalem with him had been just before alarmed by the enquiries of the Magians. “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” Matth. ii. 1. 2.”^m

I must confess that I am unable to perceive the force of the second part of this argument. It may be very true that the child Jesus could not have been “*safely* brought to the temple, nor such notice taken of him, if Herod and all Jerusalem with him had just before been alarmed by the enquiries of the Magians.” But this is no proof that he *was* not brought by his parents at that dangerous period, unless it could be shewn

^m Lardner, vol. VI. p. 149.

that they were acquainted with the danger. But it will appear plain to any one who will impartially consider the 2d chapter of St. Matthew, that they could not have been acquainted with it. It was *privately* that Herod called the Magians unto him, and enquired of them when they had first seen the star. It was privately that he sent them to make an accurate search after the child ; and it was in the depth of his own heart alone unknown and unthought of by all, that he entertained the cruel intention of murdering him when found ;—pretending in his outward conduct and expressions the greatest pleasure at the prospect, and the greatest anxiety to pay him that adoration which was due to a being whose birth had been so wonderfully announced. These professions so entirely deceived the Magi that it appears to have been necessary to warn them in a dream not to return to Herod to make the communication he desired, but to take another route for their journey into their own country. What then was there in the enquiries of the Magians to rouse the fears of the mother of Jesus, or to tell her husband of the danger they would incur in carrying her son to the temple for presentation ? Of their danger they were not at all aware until the dream revealed it to Joseph, and therefore that danger, however great, could be no reason for their not presenting Jesus in the temple, even after the visit of the Magi both to

Herod and to themselves. They could not be influenced by a motive of which they were ignorant. The utmost therefore which this consideration proves is, that the presentation did not take place after the *dream* in which Joseph was informed of the designs of Herod. Whilst he was unacquainted with those designs it proves nothing at all.

But, thus differing with Lardner in the force of one part of his reasoning, I acquiesce entirely in the validity of the conclusion which may be drawn from the first circumstance he has adduced. The 12th chapter of Leviticus, which appoints the offerings for the purification of women after childbirth, does not appoint different offerings for persons in different ranks of life,—a lamb and a pigeon or a turtle-dove for the rich, and a pair of pigeons or turtle-doves for the poor, generically so called; but it requires a lamb and a pigeon from every one whether rich or poor, who has it in her power to offer them, and allows the substitution of two pigeons or turtle-doves in cases of positive inability alone. “If she be *not able* to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles or two young pigeons.” ver. 8. Now whatever may have been the value of the presents made by the Magi to our Saviour, it cannot be possibly conceived that the gold, frankincense and myrrh,

which were things extremely valuable in themselves, and which the Magi had thought it their duty to bring as gifts to royalty from so great a distance and upon so extraordinary an occasion, should have been of so trifling a nature and so small in amount as not to enable his parents to make a purchase of the larger and proper offering prescribed by the law. And if these gifts were sufficient for that purpose it is equally inconceivable that the piety of Mary's heart and the wonderful circumstances attending the event which she was celebrating, and which made her more peculiarly bound in gratitude to God, should permit her to violate that law, and offer to heaven of that which comparatively speaking would cost her nothing, when she had it in her power literally to fulfil the rites of her religion, and every reason in the world to make her wish to fulfil them. Under this view of the subject I certainly hold it as an indisputable fact, that Mary was "*not able* to bring a lamb for an offering," and consequently that the Magi did not arrive in *Bethlehem* and make their offerings to Jesus until *after* his presentation in the temple.

But whilst I make this admission with regard to the arrival of the Magi in *Bethlehem*, I consider it as equally certain that they had arrived in *Jerusalem* before the presentation of Jesus. This

appears to me to be evidently implied in the circumstances which then took place.

If Jesus had been *previously* presented, the prophecies of Simeon and Anna must previously also have come to the ears of Herod, and have prompted him, even before the arrival of the Magi, to have called together a council of the chief priests and scribes—to have put to them the same questions, which we find he afterwards did, respecting the place of the Messiah's birth, and to have concerted immediate and effectual measures for putting to death so formidable a rival. All this he would in that case most certainly and previously have done. For as he was an Idumæan by descent, and almost an usurper of the government, or at least the ruler without the consent of the Jews,ⁿ he had no claims of kindred or of choice to establish his throne and remove his jealousy. And as he was a Jew by religion,^o he would more certainly credit and be more seriously alarmed by the declaration of an aged prophet (perhaps priest), and a religious devotee of his own persuasion, both probably known and generally believed to be favoured and inspired by

ⁿ Vide Joseph. Antiq. xvii. 8. p. 595. G. et alibi.

^o Ἡρώδου ἐξ ἔθνων καταστηθέντος, προσηλύτου μὲν τοι γὰρ. Epiph. Hær. v. cap. 22.

heaven, than by the unsupported assertions of some unknown eastern sages, who were commonly notorious for superstition and astrology. As therefore he was so grievously troubled by the arrival of the Magi in search of the King of the Jews, we may be sure that he never would have despised "the notice taken of Jesus in the temple" had it preceded their arrival and reached his ears. He would, under that supposition, already have enquired into the family and birth-place of our Saviour, and already have decided upon his fate; nor would he have displayed that utter ignorance upon the subject, which we find him shewing when they afterwards came.

It is possible, however, it may be said, that though the prophecies of Simeon and Anna had been uttered before the arrival of the Magi, they had not before that time been communicated to Herod. This certainly is possible, though by no means probable. Granting it however for the sake of argument, yet still when they did come, and "Herod and all Jerusalem was troubled with him," and the council of priests and scribes, of whom this very Simeon would probably be one of the chief, was called and consulted upon the subject, there would surely be some one to mention the presentation of Christ and the circumstances and wonders attending it. They were

too singular to be forgotten, too impressive and important not to be canvassed afresh upon the recurrence of any connected event, even though they had happened more than a year before.

Now if these things *were* told to Herod either before or when the Magi arrived, his conduct as represented by St. Matthew, is marked by no less than three absolute inconsistencies.

In the first place, he would never have given the command he did give to the Magi to “go and search diligently for the child, and when they had found him bring him word again,” for it would have been perfectly unnecessary. He had only to ask what and who the child was who had been thus presented and acknowledged, and then, without the superfluous and horrible cruelty of slaying the infants of a whole village and its neighbourhood, he would at once have ascertained the name, and been enabled to get rid of the object of his apprehensions by a private emissary.

In the second place, even supposing that his irresistible passions and habits of callous barbarity had tempted him to so unavailing a massacre, that act could never have been with propriety attributed to the disappointment he felt at not seeing the Magi return as its *only* cause. Yet

St. Matthew does attribute it to that one motive alone, and states very clearly that he regulated its extent, *solely* by the enquiries he had made as to the first appearance of the star. Hence it is irresistibly plain that in the Evangelist's opinion Herod knew nothing about the presentation when he gave the order for the murder of the Innocents. For had he been acquainted with it at that time, he would rather have proceeded upon the more precise information which might thus have been obtained, than the uncertain surmises afforded by the first appearance of the star.

In the third place, the priests and scribes, when Herod demanded of them where Christ was born, would never have founded the reason of the answer which they gave, "In Bethlehem of Judea," upon the interpretation of the words of Micah, but upon the fact with which they must have been already acquainted. At least when they said, "For thus it is written by the prophet," they would have added also "and thus it has been fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, whose presentation in the temple has been hailed by the prophetic salutations of the holy Simeon and Anna."

Had then the presentation of Jesus and the prophecies accompanying it taken place previous

to the arrival of the Magi in *Jerusalem*, they would have been made known to Herod, either before or when those Magi came, and if made known to Herod either before or when the Magi came, the whole account of St. Matthew is inconsistent and absurd. No man in similar circumstances would have acted as Herod is reported to have done. The consultation with the priests, the answer of the priests, the directions to the Magi, and the general massacre of *Bethlehem*, are in that case unnecessary and incredible. But, assuming the truth of what I have suggested, and supposing the Magi to have arrived in *Jerusalem* a little *before* and in *Bethlehem* a little *after* the presentation, every thing in the account of St. Matthew will be found reasonable. A little before the presentation of Jesus, the Magi arrived at Jerusalem in special search for the new-born King of the Jews. Herod struck with the motive of their mission, and its coincidence with the general expectation then entertained of the coming of the Messiah, enquires of the learned and religious in what place the Messiah should be born. Having ascertained this point, he next enquires of the Magi the probable time of his birth as deducible from the appearance of the star, (an enquiry quite needless if he was already acquainted with the presentation,) and for this purpose he privately and particularly examines them, and commands

them, when they had found the object of their search, to return and give him information. In the mean time, perhaps during the very period of this interview, Joseph brings his wife for purification, and his son for presentation to the temple, and then returns to Bethlehem, a distance of but six miles. Having received in the evening the offerings of the Magi, he is warned to fly from Herod, and sets off with his family for Egypt by night. In the morning Herod, not finding the Magi return, in order completely to relieve his suspicions, sends forth his emissaries to slay every child within the sphere of his suspicions, both as to place and time. But learning afterwards, from the report made to him relative to the transactions which on the preceding day had attended the presentation of Jesus, that *he* was the object of whom he was afraid, and from the names of the children destroyed, that he had not been cut off in the general massacre, he continued seeking the child's life (Matth. ii. 20.) to the very day of his death.

Such is the order in which I would arrange the events subsequent to our Saviour's birth, the arrival of the Magi in *Jerusalem* a little before,—in *Bethlehem* a little after the presentation; and that event of course in the interval between both. It is in this latter point,—in separating the *visit of the Magi*, as it is technically termed, into two

portions, and inserting the presentation between them, that the method I have pursued differs, I believe, from that of every other individual. The generality of writers consider this visit of the Magi in the light of a single undivided occurrence, and make no distinction between their arrival at Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Hence those, who perceived the force of the objections which prove that the Magi could not have reached Bethlehem and made their offerings before the presentation, too hastily concluded that they had not reached Jerusalem before that event. Whilst those on the other hand, who felt convinced that they must have reached Jerusalem before the presentation, as rashly conceived that they had before it also presented their gifts in Bethlehem. Considering the transaction as a contemporaneous whole, they vainly endeavoured to extricate themselves from the dilemma. In this error I remained for a long time, and necessarily felt the greatest difficulty in framing a defensible hypothesis. Whichever alternative I adopted I threw myself upon a valid objection, and was compelled to maintain one of the following absurdities,—either that when the Magi came Herod heard nothing about the prophecies and presentation of Jesus, although they had occurred before, or that Mary offered the lesser gift for her purification after having received the costly gifts of these oriental sages. It was not

till after the most mature deliberation that I became aware of the fallacy and perceived the facility of removing every difficulty by no longer considering the arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem and Bethlehem as contemporaneous events, and by so introducing the presentation as to make it clash with neither of the objections.

We must now inquire when the purification of the Virgin which corresponds with the presentation of Jesus took place. The general opinion is, that it took place as usual at the expiration of 40 days after the birth of the child, and in this I perfectly agree. It has been doubted however, and there are those who say that the language of the Mosaic law implies only that the purification of the mother shall not take place before the expiration of 40 days after the birth of a male child, but does not prevent its being deferred for a longer period. It really would appear as if there were some minds so fond of uncertainty and doubt, that they were unwilling to permit any thing to pass undisputed; for in the present instance nothing can be more plain than that if nothing interfered with the performance of the appointed rite, it should be performed on the earliest allowable day. "*When* the days of her purifying are fulfilled for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering

and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering." Levit. xii. 6. I know of nothing in this case which could prevent the observance of the command,—I remember the pious disposition of Joseph and Mary,—I feel convinced of their desire to continue in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless, and therefore I cannot for a moment doubt that they brought Jesus to the temple at the specified time. I consequently conclude that the purification took place on the 41st day after the birth of Jesus, and that the Magi arrived in Jerusalem a day or two before. Now we have already shewn that the Magi arrived in Jerusalem on or *before* the 13th of February, J. P. 4710. Reckoning therefore 40 days back from that date, we fix the birth of Jesus either on or *before* the 3d of January, J. P. 4710, that is, he *must* have been born at least one year before the death of Herod, supposing him to have died about the beginning of J. P. 4711.

CHAP. III.

SECTION II.

The probable MONTH of the Nativity,

WE have seen in the last section how long the birth of Christ *must*, we are now to endeavour to shew how much longer his birth *may* have preceded the death of Herod.

For any thing that has been hitherto stated, it is not *absolutely requisite* to fix the birth of Christ before the 3d of January, J. P. 4710. But wherever it is unnecessary, it is improper to carry back any date to a more remote period; and upon this principle we ought to act in the present instance. We ought not to throw back the birth of Jesus without reason. If therefore we can find out with any degree of probability the *Season* of the year at which Jesus was born, we are authorized to refer it back as far as that season in the year immediately preceding the 3d of January, J. P. 4710, before which we have seen that Christ *must* have been born, but no

farther. In a word, we must seek for it in, and not beyond, the year comprehended between the 3d of January, J. P. 4710, and the 3d of January, J. P. 4709; unless some other chronological mark should occur in the course of the discussion to require a contrary mode of proceeding. Thus the *season* of the year at which Christ was born appears to be the only question, the determination of which is still wanting to enable us to fix the *probable* date of his birth. I shall therefore examine it with as much diligence and impartiality as are in my power.

Two methods of ascertaining the period of the year in which Christ was born have been deduced by chronologers from the characters of that event which have been left by the Evangelists.

1. Since St. Luke informs us, chap. i. 36. that the annunciation of the Virgin Mary took place in the sixth month after the conception of Elizabeth, it is evident that, if Jesus the son of Mary was born after the usual period of gestation, he must have been born between five and six months after John the Baptist the son of Elizabeth. Consequently if the date of the birth of John the Baptist can be found, that of Jesus may easily be calculated.

Now it appears from the 24th chapter of the 1st book of Chronicles, that the Jewish priests were divided into 24 courses or families, according to the number of "chief men found among the sons of Eleazar and Ithamar the sons of Aaron." The order in which these courses were to follow each other was determined by lot, and is there regularly detailed. From this order it appears that the course of Abia to which Zacharias the father of John the Baptist belonged was the eighth in the list, and from various passages in Josephus it may be collected that no motive however strong, not even the peril of death itself, could induce any course to forego or depart from its turn in those holy ministrations in the temple, which passed in regular and undeviating succession from one family to another, and continued in each, from sabbath to sabbath,^a for the space of seven days. They adhered with this strictness to the appointed order from the united sense of gain and of religion; of gain, on account of the profit they derived from their share in the almost innumerable sacrifices that were daily offered; of religion, from the sacred reverence with which they regarded every national institution. Now the whole number of courses of priests multiplied by the number of days each course officiated, that is, 7×24 will

^a Joseph, *Antiq. lib. vii, cap. 11, p. 248, G.*

give 168 days for a complete cycle of these weekly ministrations. If therefore we can find at what period of any given year any one of these courses was in the turn of its ministration, we may—provided the due order of succession was never disturbed by any unavoidable accident,—from that single fact, and by a mere arithmetical calculation establish the period at which the same or any other given course would enter upon its ministration in any preceding or succeeding year. Yet after all our endeavours, we must not expect that the proposed calculations will enable us, even under the most favourable circumstances, to settle for ever, and by their own evidence alone, the controversy with regard to the *month* of Christ's birth. Twice in every year, and in some years three times, did each course minister to the Lord. Even then if the principles upon which we are reasoning be correct, it is evident that they will always lead to a double and therefore a dubious result. They will always fix two seasons of the year, at about six months distance from each other, at which, in any year, the Saviour of the world may have been born. Nevertheless it will still be worth our while to obtain even this approximation; and as there have been several theories propounded, I will consider them in their chronological order.

No one has made a more happy use of the

chronological instrument of which we are speaking than Scaliger^b, and his reasoning, or rather hypothesis, is so extremely ingenious that there is no one but would wish it to be true, though deeming it not perfectly satisfactory in every point. On this account it requires a more than ordinary degree of strictness and scrupulosity in its examination, because its captivating plausibility is liable at every turn to blind the judgment and mislead us into a decision in its favour almost under every difficulty.

From the reign of David in which they were first instituted to the days of Judas Maccabæus, Scaliger admits that the regular succession of the courses was several times disturbed; more especially during the calamity of the Babylonish captivity and the three years' profanation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes. He deems it therefore a vain attempt to form a computation from any facts with which we may be acquainted within the limits of that period, and in this he differs from others whose opinion we shall afterwards investigate. But it is recorded in the 4th chapter of the 1st book of Maccabees, verse 52, that the sanctuary was cleared from the profanation of Antiochus, and the daily sacrifice in the temple renewed,

^b De Emend. Temp. Notæ in Fragm.

“ on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month (which is called the month Casleu) in the hundred forty and eighth year :” that is on the 22d of November, J. P. 4549. Upon that occasion the ministrations of the priesthood were of course renewed, and Scaliger affirms, that from that day they were carefully continued and uninterruptedly acted upon till the ruin of Jerusalem brought the Jewish polity to a mournful and perpetual end. He maintains this, because there is no evidence to the contrary, and no event upon record which could make an interruption necessary. He also conjectures that, when the celebration of the Mosaic rites and sacrifices was thus restored by Judas, the first of the priestly families, the family of Joarib, would naturally enter first upon the service of the temple, in consequence of its precedence, and for the sake of order and regularity. We have only therefore to find how many revolutions of 168 days are contained in the interval between the 22d of November, J. P. 4549, and any subsequent date, and then, whether there be any or no remainder, we shall immediately perceive which of the classes of priests was in office at the time. If there be no remainder, the family of Joarib was just entering upon its office. If there be a remainder, equal to one, two, three, or four, &c. multiples of seven, then the second, third, fourth, or fifth, &c.

course was about to enter upon its ministration. Scaliger, conceiving J. P. 4711. to have been the year, adopts this method to determine September as the month in which our Saviour was born. We have laboured on the contrary to render it probable that Jesus was born in the year which elapsed between the 3d of January, J. P. 4709, and the 3d of January, J. P. 4710. Now Jesus having been conceived between 5 and 6 months after John the Baptist, if we add to them 9 other months for the usual period of gestation, we shall find that Jesus, if not born out of due course, must have been born about 14 or 15 months after his forerunner's conception; consequently *that* ministration of Zacharias, at the conclusion of which John the Baptist was conceived, must be sought for at least 14 months before the 3d of January, J. P. 4710, that is, before the 3d of November, J. P. 4708, and not more than 14 months before the 3d of January, J. P. 4709, that is, not before the 3d of November, J. P. 4707. In other words we must see at what time or times the 8th class of priests, the family of Abia and Zacharias, was in service during the year comprehended between the 3d of November, J. P. 4707, and the 3d of November, J. P. 4708. Now in this interval the course of Abia entered upon its turn of service for the first time on the 3d of April, and for the

second time on the 18th of September, J. P. 4708.^c Hence it follows that reckoning 14 months complete from each of these ministrations, the birth of Jesus took place either in the month of June, or in the latter part of November or the beginning of December, J. P. 4709.

A very obvious remark in opposition to this theory of Scaliger is, that one principal fact in his train of reasoning, namely the commencement of the renewed celebration of the priestly offices in the temple in the days of Judas by the family of Joarib, is nothing more than a conjecture. But if the courses were indeed as tenacious of their rights as they are stated, and may be proved both from the nature of the case and from Josephus to have been, it is hardly natural to suppose that they would consent to the preference shewn to the family of Joarib. It is a more consistent inference to suppose that either they resumed their services at that link in the chain in which it had been broken off by Antiochus, or else that they proceeded in the same manner as if their regularity had never

^c For the latter of these calculations I am indebted to Petavius, de Doctr. Temp. lib. xii. cap. 7. To ascertain the former, I have merely reckoned back one complete cycle of ministration, or 168 days from the 18th of Sept. J. P. 4708. Lamy has himself furnished us with the necessary calculations upon his own theory. For those upon Mann's hypothesis I am myself responsible.

suffered any interruption at all. Lamy has perceived the uncertainty which on account of this circumstance attends the method pursued by Scaliger, and endeavours to avoid its force and establish his own opinion by another mode of computation, founded upon the same principles, but leading to a different result.^d He takes for the groundwork of his calculations a passage from the Talmud, in which it is stated that the destruction of the second temple at Jerusalem took place, like that of the first, on the ninth day of the month Ab, “in finem Sabbati, finemque Heptaeridos et Ephemeriam Joaribi.” Now the ninth day of the Jewish month Ab in that year, in which Jerusalem was finally taken and destroyed by the Romans, corresponds to the 4th of August, J. P. 4783, which was also a sabbath-day. On that day, therefore, the family of Joarib *entered* upon their ministration in the temple, which always began and ended at the time of the morning sacrifice on the sabbath;^e and by following up the usual calculations in a retrograde order, the times of service for the course of Abia in any preceding year may be found.

The authority of the Talmud, the foundation

^d Lamy App. Chron. Part I. cap. viii. sect. 7, p. 61.

^e Scaliger Notæ in Fragn. p. 55.

of this theory, is not held in very high repute. But then the coincidence of the month and day, on which the first and second temples were destroyed, has also been remarked as a singularity by Josephus,^f and this partial confirmation of the Talmudical legend by such a distinguished writer, does certainly shed a degree of credibility over the other circumstances it contains, to which without that support they would not have been at all entitled. I cannot however help remarking that it is as common a fraud to add to marvellous but acknowledged truth, as it is to fabricate inventions entirely new. Yet did the conclusions of these two theories correspond, and fix the services of the same courses to the same periods, they would throw mutual light and confirmation upon each other, and the doubts I have suggested would be scarcely worth a thought. But unfortunately this is not the case. According to Lamy the course of Abia will be found officiating in the temple on the 17th instead of the 3d of April, and on the 2d of October instead of the 18th of September, J. P. 4708, in other words a fortnight later than they are placed in the same year by the calculations of Scaliger. This is not any material variation with regard to the determination of the season of the year at which Christ was born; but it is fatal to

^f De Bell. Jud. lib. vii. cap. 10, p. 958. F.

the accuracy of one, and renders dubious the accuracy of both the contending parties.

But we are not yet at the end of the labyrinth. There is still a third theory, that of Mann,^s formed by an injudicious combination of the premises of Lamy and Scaliger, and rendered in consequence both more complicated and more liable to objection. Mann takes for the basis of his computation the second alternative proposed in the objection to Scaliger. He imagines that after the restoration of the daily sacrifice by Judas Maccabæus the priests proceeded in their ministrations in the same manner as if they had continued through the whole time of the profanation by Antiochus; *that* course entering upon its service on the 22d of November, J. P. 4549, to which the turn would regularly have belonged had their series and succession never been disturbed. But this is a mere supposition. Josephus does indeed say^h that the division of the priests into 24 classes continued down to his days, but he does not say that the proper period of their several ministrations had never been changed by any unavoidable cause. The number and order of the classes he states to have remained the same, but that proves nothing

^s De annis Christi, cap. xii. p. 86.

^h Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 11. p. 249. A.

as to the unbroken continuity of their weekly services, or the manner in which they might act when any interruption occurred.

Be this however as it may, he assumes and builds upon it as a fact. He observes that, according to Ezra iii. 6. the daily sacrifice in the temple after the Babylonian captivity, was resumed on the 1st day of the month Tisri; that is, on the 24th of September, J. P. 4178, and that the temple was ultimately destroyed by the Romans on the 4th of August, J. P. 4783, the interval between which dates amounts exactly to 22092 days, or 1315 cycles of priestly ministration complete. Therefore, *if* the family of Joarib *entered* upon its ministration at the former period,—and *if* the course and series remained undisturbed, notwithstanding the suspension of their office during the oppressions of Antiochus,—the same family had just *concluded* its service at the latter date. It is evident how much of this argument is conditional. But that the family of Joarib *had* just concluded its service at the destruction of the second temple he deduces from the testimony of a Jewish Chronicle called Seder Olam, in which is the following passage: “Quum prius vastaretur templum erat extremum Sabbati et rursus extremum septimi anni erat. Præterea erat septimana stationis Joarib et nonus dies mensis Ab. Et ita

quoque hæc omnia fuisse *in secundo* excidio.” Did this quotation bear out his assertion (which it does not) yet the book is according to Allix even of less authority¹ than that quoted by Lamy; so that after all, Mann’s hypothesis rests upon the same unstable foundation as that of Scaliger, namely, a *conjecture*, that after the interruption of the Babylonian captivity the order of ministration was recommenced in the family of Joarib, the first upon the list. But this is not the only fault of this theory. It is equally unsatisfactory in its results, as in its origin, and, by differing from both, only serves to increase the difficulty and confusion which the two former had created. For by placing the final destruction of the temple of Jerusalem at the *conclusion* of the ministration of the course of Joarib, instead of the *beginning*, according to Lamy; it fixes the two ministrations of the course of Abia in J. P. 4708, one week earlier than that chronologer, and one week later than Scaliger; namely on the 10th of April and the 25th of September. Whether Mann or Lamy be right I deem it impossible to say. The passages they have quoted only inform us that the temple was destroyed *during* the service of Joarib’s family. The day of the destruction was indeed a sabbath-day, and therefore of course either the

¹ Allix, p. 50.

first or the last day of their service; but *which*, I consider as utterly indeterminable. I rather incline to the side of Lamy.

In consequence of these variations in the three hypotheses, it would now seem to be our duty separately to examine the arguments in favour or depreciation of each, and by this means determine which has the best claim upon our attention and support. But we are spared the necessity of so laborious a task by those other difficulties which lie at the root of every theory which either has been or can be framed upon the subject.

I consider the eighth chapter to be one of the most impartial and judicious in Allix's work upon the natal year of Christ. Yet he cannot at any time long forbear advancing some strange and indefensible opinion, and consequently we find him at the conclusion maintaining that *μήν ἕκτος* in St. Luke i. 26, does not mean, as it has appeared to every commentator who has taken the trouble of comparing the 26th and 36th verses together to mean, the sixth month after the conception of Elizabeth, but the sixth month, the month Elul of the Jewish year. This conjecture he can only have hazarded, because its admission would be favourable to his idea, that the birth of Jesus took place in spring. But if it be necessary to bolster

up that date by such untenable assertions, I should for my own part, be content to resign it altogether. The body of the chapter is however less objectionable. After considering Scaliger's theory as it has been stated above, and shewing that though he makes it subservient to the establishment of the month of September for the nativity of Christ, it is equally favourable to those who wish to fix the nativity in spring, he proceeds to state those objections which tend to invalidate his conclusions, as well as those of every other writer.

The first objection to any perfect accuracy upon this point is deduced from Nehemiah, chap. xii. The prophet in verse 1, 2, &c. recounts only 22 and not 24 priests as the chief of the priests who went up to the temple with Zerubbabel; and from this Allix concludes that it is at least problematical whether all the 24 courses of priests returned to Jerusalem after the captivity of Babylon, or whether only 22 being mentioned, we are not bound to suppose that two had failed or perhaps remained behind in Babylon. Again, the prophet, verse 12, 13, &c. mentions only 21 priests as chiefs of the fathers in the days of Joiakim. From this circumstance compared with that which has been stated above, Allix infers that the number of families or courses of priests had changed in the interval between Zerubbabel

and Joiakim, and consequently that any calculation, formed upon the supposition of their number continuing always the same, must not and cannot be depended on.

The whole force of this objection rests upon the assumption, that there were no more families than there are chiefs of the priests or families specified by Nehemiah. But this is positively contradicted by the 17th verse, in which Nehemiah places the name of Piltai as chief of *two* families,—those of Miniamin and Moadiah. Hence it is evident that, though only 21 chiefs of families are specified in the days of Joiakim, there were still 22 families or courses. Consequently Allix's objection cannot be relied on. The number of families was the same in the days of Zerubbabel and Joiakim, and it is not therefore certain that only 22 families returned after the captivity, because only 22 chiefs of families are mentioned as having gone up with Zerubbabel. It is probable that 22 chiefs may in this latter instance have presided over 24 families, as it is certain that 21 did over 22 in the former. The existence of 24 courses to the very last is indeed testified both by Josephus and the Talmud.^k Josephus states that the distribution of the priests remained un-

^k Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 11. p. 249. A. Lamy App. Chron. i. 8. 7.

changed in his time, and the Talmud accounts for it by remarking that, although only four of the original families returned from the captivity, they were subdivided, as before, into 24 classes.

Allix contends, secondly, that these theories are uncertain, because their accuracy depends not only upon there being 24 families of priests, but also upon each family ministering for one week in succession. This he asserts cannot be allowed. If several families were united under one chief, those united families would be counted only as one, and would therefore minister only one week, instead of several. I acknowledge that there is considerable force in this remark, and am inclined to allow that it throws such a degree of uncertainty upon all the computations, as to make them unsafe to be relied upon with implicit credit. It is needless however to insist upon them any further. For without taking into consideration the dubiousness of the premises of these theories, there is one circumstance which will always render their conclusions indefinite and therefore useless to a certain extent. When I observed that Jesus was born between 14 and 15 months after the conception of John the Baptist, I assumed as a necessary condition that he was born after the usual period of gestation. But this does not appear to have been universally admitted amongst

the ancient Christians. We have the testimony of Epiphanius¹ to the existence of an opinion which stated that Jesus was born into the world at the expiration of the seventh or in the middle of the tenth month from the day of his conception. That these opinions are neither absurd in themselves nor inconsistent with experience, the evidence of the celebrated Dr. Hunter^m is a sufficient proof;

¹ τινῶν λεγόντων ἐν παραδόσει, ὡς ὅτι διὰ ἑπτὰ μηνῶν ἐγεννήθη. Hær. 51. cap. xxix. pag. 451. A. And a little afterwards, τινὲς δὲ φασιν..... ὡς εἶναι ἐννέα μῆνας, καὶ ἡμέρας δεκαπέντε, καὶ ὥρας τέσσαρας.

It is possible that the idea of our Saviour's birth after a *seven* month's conception may have originated in some superstitious notions with regard to the luckiness of that period of gestation. τίς γὰρ οὐκ οἶδεν, says Philo Judæus, (Νόμ. ἱερῶν Ἀλληγοριῶν, lib. i. p. 45. ed. Mangey,) ὅτι τῶν βρεφῶν τὰ μὲν ἑπταμηνιαῖα γόνιμα κ. τ. εἶ. But for the latter opinion no similar reason can, I believe, be assigned.

^m Query. "What is the usual period for a woman's going with child? What is the earliest time for a child's being born alive, and what the latest?"

Reply 1. "The usual period is nine calendar months, but there is very commonly a difference of one, two, or three weeks."

2. "A child may be born alive at any time from three months; but we see none born with powers of coming to manhood, or of being reared, before *seven* calendar months, or near that time. At six months it cannot be."

3. "I have known a woman bear a living child, in a perfectly natural way, fourteen days later than nine calendar months, and *believe* two women to have been delivered of a child alive, in a natural way, above ten calendar months from the hour of conception."

This

and it is difficult to account for their origin in the present case, except upon the supposition of some actual deviation from the course of nature in the event to which it alludes. If then we admit the truth of this tradition, (and we can never positively demonstrate that it ought not to be believed) we must remove the date we have already derived from the supposed time at which Zacharias was ministering in the temple, and fix the birth of Jesus either two months earlier or nearly one month later in the spring or autumn; but yet without any certainty that we are acting right in making the alteration.

Upon the whole then it would appear that we are unable from the succession of the courses of the priests to determine with accuracy and without hesitation the season of the year at which either Jesus or his precursor the Baptist was born. The mode of calculation is too questionable and the conclusion to which it leads too indeterminate to be relied upon in any matter of real difficulty and importance.

2. That there were shepherds abiding in the

This opinion would almost seem to have been framed to meet the question as to the possibility of the traditions recorded by Epiphanius.

fields by night," that there was a general census of the inhabitants of Judea, and that shortly after the purification of the Virgin the parents of Jesus were commanded by God to go into Egypt, are facts which form the substance of the second argument by which it is attempted to demonstrate the period of the year at which Christ was born. The end however to which these circumstances are capable of being applied is not so much to decide affirmatively in favour of any one particular hypothesis, as to determine negatively against the common date by which the nativity is placed in the calendars of all modern churches in the middle of winter, and on the 25th of December. But

" Luc. cap. ii. ver. 8. " Quippe de *nocturnis* excubiis *non* dicit Evangelista. Interpretes quidem verbum *αγραιοειν* reddunt *vigilare*, vel *excubare*. Sed melius veritas, *sub dio agere*. Proprie vero, ut origo indicat, notat *ἐν ἄγρῳ ἀνλίζεσθαι*. Id vero non diurno minus tempore convenit quam nocturno." Vossius de Natali Christi. p. 81. How could so learned a man have fallen into so egregious an error? Had he never read the words of St. Luke? Ποιμένες ἦσαν ἐν τῇ χάρᾳ τῇ αὐτῇ ἀγραιοῦντες καὶ φυλάσσοντες φυλακὰς ΤΗΣ ΝΥΚΤΟΣ--"Keeping watch over their flocks *by night*." I have not made this remark so much for the sake of finding fault with Vossius, as of shewing that it is very possible, by trusting too implicitly to the treacherous impressions of memory, to make mistakes which are almost unaccountable, and hence to infer with regard to some similar mistakes of Irenæus and Epiphanius which will be afterwards noticed, that they most probably sprung from a similar cause, a dependence upon memory, and not from their quoting from copies of the New Testament, different from those which are now in use.

even upon this limited application of the argument the opinions of writers are extremely various. By Scaliger and Allix they are held to be destructive of the commonly received date; by Petavius and Lamy they are treated as frivolous and unimportant. These are authoritative names and opposed to each other, and their difference makes it a duty, even at the hazard of prolixity, to give a statement of the bearings of the question, and thus enable the reader to judge for himself.

That the shepherds could not have been abiding in the fields by night in the middle of winter has been repeated from mouth to mouth with a sort of triumphant confidence, which is by no means justified by the loose and scanty information we possess with reference to the habits of the pastoral life in Palestine. It is certain from the testimony of several travellers that some of the wandering Arabian tribes dwell in their tents in the open plains (the very meaning of the Evangelist's term ἀγραυλοῦντες) both in winter and summer.^o On the other hand, it is probable, that St. Luke did not allude, under the word ποιμένες, to any pastoral tribes, but to the herdsmen of the neighbouring village of Bethlehem. Now it was

^o Harmer's Observations, vol. I, chap. 2. p. 77. To judge properly of this question the reader should examine the 1st and 2d chapters both of the 1st and 3d volumes.

not customary to turn out their flocks to pasture until a short time before the period of shearing, or in March. This is the opinion of Harmer;^p and Volney^q divides the land of Palestine into two climates, that of the mountains and the plains; in the former of which he declares that even as far as Jerusalem (in the immediate neighbourhood of which Bethlehem was situated on very high ground,) the snow usually continues from November to March. If this be correct, it is impossible to despise the objection, though not quite conclusive.

The improbability of a Roman edict or officer appointing a general census of all the inhabitants of Judea, and requiring the immediate and simultaneous presence even of the sick, the infirm, and the pregnant in the cities to which they respectively belonged at the most inclement part of the year is another argument very strongly urged against fixing the nativity to the 25th of December. I should have had more dependence upon this argument, did I always find governments consulting the ease and comfort of the subjects for whom they legislate, or had Judea been situated in a latitude where the climate was more ungenial and severe, or had I not known that one of the principal feasts

^p *Observ.* vol. III. p. 41.

^q *Travels in Syr. and Pal.* vol. I. p. 291.

of the Jews, the festival of the dedication, was annually celebrated in December.[†] I will not however disguise from the reader that I have found one instance in which the execution of a somewhat similar measure was deferred by the constituted authorities of Judea upon the very ground which we are now considering, the inclemency of the winter season. When Ezra upon the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity found that there were many, even amongst the priests and Levites as well as the people at large, who had violated the Mosaic law and married foreign wives by whom they had children, he commanded them to remove the pollution by immediately separating themselves from the strange women and their families.* This was in the ninth Jewish month, and the twentieth day of the month. Those who had been guilty of this transgression confessed their fault, and expressed their readiness to remedy it as far as lay in their power. "But forasmuch as they that had transgressed in this thing were many, and it was winter, and a time of much rain, so that they could not stand without, and it was not a work of a day or two," they requested that "the rulers of the people might stay,

[†] John x. 22.

* Compare Ezra, chap. x, and 1st of Esdras, chap. ix, with Josephus Antiq. lib. xi, cap. 5, p. 370.

and let all them which had taken strange wives come at appointed times with the elders of every city, and the judges thereof." This was complied with, and the inquisition, which was begun on the first day of the tenth month, was continued, in consideration of the severity of the winter and the inconvenience which would necessarily arise from a compulsory edict demanding the immediate presence of all the wives, and children, and elders, and judges at that inclement season, until the first day of the first month. This is a case exactly in point, and may be applied with great propriety to the decree for a general census in Judea, which was much more extensive in its operation,—for it comprehended the whole of the inhabitants of the land ;—and yet not half so pressing and important in its nature,—for it involved no violation of their religion or law. It would therefore, if taken in December, have occasioned more difficulty and misery in its execution, without having the same excuse to justify a departure from the principles of prudence and humanity.

The third part of this objection, which states the incredibility of the Deity sending Joseph and his wife and child into Egypt, is not of much weight. The journey did not commence till more than forty days after the birth of Jesus. Consequently if he was born on the 25th of December the spring would,

in that southern climate, have made some advances before they set out.

The preceding remarks will, I trust, have pretty clearly determined the value of the arguments to which they refer, and shewn that no method of reasoning which has hitherto been attempted by learned men is sufficiently precise or satisfactory to determine our opinion either for or against any particular hypothesis respecting the season of the year at which our Saviour was born. Tradition is the only remaining mode of solving our doubts, and to that we must in the last place direct our attention, and weigh the prevalence and antiquity of the traditions which have reached us in such an even balance as may shew on which side the scale should preponderate.

An ancient tradition of the oriental church fixed the nativity to the 6th of January, and that opinion prevailed amongst the Greeks until the 4th century, when the authority of Chrysostom and the growing ascendancy of the Roman see, gave its decisions a more than ordinary degree of consequence, and brought its hypothesis into general repute. Since that period the 25th of December, which differs so slightly from the other that they may be considered as equivalent, has

prevailed almost exclusively in Christendom, and been externally acquiesced in, though not perhaps internally approved by believers of every denomination for the space of more than 1400 years. On this account the history of its origin and progress is a curious and interesting subject of speculation, and we have fortunately a fertile source of information in the Homily which Chrysostom has expressly dedicated to its consideration.[†] A critical discussion of the day of Christ's birth certainly seems a singularly unedifying subject for an episcopal exhortation to an assembly of Christian worshippers. In modern times it would scarce be tolerated even in an University pulpit, in any other form than as a "Concio ad Clerum." But formerly it was otherwise, and we should be thankful,—thankful that, for our use, the curious and subtle spirit of the Greeks delighted in such barren speculations, and still more so, that the temper of the present times demands from the preacher something more intimately connected with the practice of piety, and the moral wants and happiness of mankind.

How long the opinion that Christ was born on the 25th of December had prevailed in the West",

[†] Oper. vol. V. Serm. 31. in Christi natalem.

[‡] Sulpicius Severus, about A. D. 401, is said to be the first who

before it was introduced into Constantinople its Bishop has not been enabled to say. He merely observes that it was of long standing and general reception. But whatever was its credit and antiquity at Rome, it had only been very lately transported across the Mediterranean, nor could it boast of a more than two years' residence in the East. These two circumstances, its novelty in the East and its long continuance in the West, naturally gave rise to two opposite parties in the church, some rejecting it on account of its late importation amongst the oriental, and some embracing it on account of its early admission amongst the occidental Christians. In consequence of these differences and doubts Chrysostom proceeds to state the three proofs by which he conceives its certainty may be established.

His first argument is extremely weak. It is the rapid progress of the opinion, and the general acquiescence of the oriental Christians; an argument which he defends by the language of Gamaliel,—“If this counsel had not been of God it would have come to nought.”

who mentions it. *Hist. Sacr. lib. ii. cap. 39.* “Christus natus est, Salino and Rufino Consulibus, 8 Kalend. Januariæ.” It is plain however, that he speaks of it as generally admitted—He is positive, “Natus est.”

His second argument appears to have a better foundation, but after all will be found defective. It rests upon the time and records of the general census during which our Saviour was born. After having quoted the well-known passage of St. Luke^v which mentions the taxing of Cyrenius, he justly observes that it is evident from hence that Jesus was born during the first taxing, and then proceeds in the following terms : κατὰ τὴν πρώτην ἀπογραφὴν ἐτέχθη. καὶ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις τοῖς δημοσίᾳ κειμένοις κώδιξιν ἐπὶ τῆς Ῥώμης ἔξεστιν ἐντυχόντα, καὶ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς ἀπογραφῆς μαθόντα, ἀκριβῶς εἰδέναι τὸν βουλούμενον τί οὖν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, φησι, τοῦτο τοὺς οὐκ ὄντας ἐκεῖ οὔτε παραγενομένους ; ἀλλ' ἄκουε καὶ μὴ ἀπίσται ὅτι παρὰ τῶν ἀκριβῶς τὰντα εἰδότων, καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐκείνην οἰκούντων παρειλήφαμεν τὴν ἡμέραν· οἱ γὰρ ἐκεῖ διατρίβοντες, ἄνωθεν καὶ ἐκ παλαιᾶς ΠΑΡΑΔΟΣΕΩΣ αὐτὴν ἐπιτελοῦντες, αὐτοὶ νῦν αὐτῆς ἡμῖν τὴν γνῶσιν διεπέμψαντο. I have quoted this passage at length, because there is something ambiguous and rather sophistical in its construction. After having stated that our Saviour was born in the days of the taxing, and that the documents relative to that birth or taxing might be inspected by any one in the archives at Rome, he very naturally introduces one of his audience as objecting that, having never been in Rome, he had no opportunity of searching the records in

^v Chap. ii. 1, 2, &c.

question. In answer to this remark, Chrysostom observes that they ought not to require ocular proof, but rely upon the fidelity of those Romans from whom they had received the account, and who were well acquainted with the fact. Having made this assertion we might have expected that he would have gone on to rest the proof of the credibility of these Romans upon their personal inspection of the boasted records. Instead of this it is curious to observe that he altogether omits this very natural ground of belief, and builds their claim to accuracy alone and entirely upon their being residents at Rome, and having inherited that ancient *tradition*, of which they had at length condescended to give the benefit to the East. From this it is pretty clear that the records in question did not then exist at Rome, and that, after all, the opinions in favour of the 25th of December were grounded only upon general tradition, and not upon any established and admissible documents. Indeed it is scarcely conceivable that the public documents of the census, however accurate, would mention the very day of Jesus's birth, with which they had nothing to do. They might insert his name, and the time at which the census was taken might be marked, but that is the utmost we could expect.

Chrysostom's third reason, and that upon which

he has dwelt the longest, is a deduction from the erroneous supposition that Zacharias, being high priest, saw the vision, which announced the birth of John the Baptist, in the sanctuary on the tenth day of Tisri, the seventh Jewish month. It is unnecessary to follow him through his copious observations upon this error; but I must be allowed positively to assert that he never hints at it as the *foundation* of the opinion he was recommending, but only as a *proof*, though indeed a powerful one and of a most convincing nature, σαφεστέραν καὶ γνωριμωτέραν ἀπόδειξιν. I have thought it necessary to enter this caution, because several writers* have boldly assumed that the date of the Latin church was founded solely upon the error of Zacharias being the high priest. That this erroneous supposition was maintained even from the fourth century I admit, and that it was used as a strong confirmation of that hypothesis which fixed the nativity on the 25th of December; but I deny that the hypothesis in question originated from the error. I rather consider the error to have been adopted to defend the opinion which had previously been formed:

From the above statement it is clear that the

* Mann, Allix, &c.

25th of December has a long and widely spread tradition in its support as the day of our Saviour's nativity, and notwithstanding the difficulty under which it labours I should not feel inclined to reject its great though unknown antiquity, unless I could produce other opinions of which the authority is greater, and the antiquity is known. But it so happens that such opinions do exist in the writings of one of the oldest and most respectable of the Christian Fathers. In the midst of that collection of miscellaneous matter which bears the title of the *Stromata* of Clemens Alexandrinus,* he has devoted one portion of his work to the discussion of the year and the month in which our Saviour was born, and states it, apparently as his own opinion, that there were between the birth of Jesus and the death of Commodus, 194 years, one month, and thirteen days. The numbers being in this passage principally expressed by words instead of literal signs leave no room for that doubt respecting the accuracy of the reading which is so serious a difficulty in the settlement of his other computations. We have only therefore to count back 194 years from the 31st of December, J. P. 4905, and we get to the 31st of December, J. P. 4711, one month and 13 days before which, or about the

* Lib. i. p. 406.

middle of November it is the declaration of Clemens that Jesus was born. With the *year* which he assigns for this event I have now nothing to do, and it has already been sufficiently demonstrated to be false. The day and the month are at present our only object, and I certainly could have wished that this Father had left us his own sentiments alone upon record. For living, as he did, amongst the Egyptians, who were a people curious and learned in their enquiries into Chronology,^s and presiding over the acadamy of Alexandria, the earliest and most celebrated of all the Christian schools, and where, if any where, the true tradition was likely to be found, his statements are entitled to a more than ordinary degree of deference. But he was too honest to disguise from his readers the fact that his own was not the universal opinion, and that there were others who pretended to have been most laboriously accurate in their investigation of this date, who differed from him altogether in their results, and fixed the birth of Jesus, some to the 25th of the Egyptian month Pachon, or in May, and some to the 24th or 25th of the month Pharmuthi, or in April. These then are the most ancient and authentic

^s “Movit me illud quod Egyptii præ gentibus aliis temporum fuerunt gnari, et illorum quæ ad tempus natalitium pertinent curiosi.” Vossius de Natali Christi, p. 81.

traditions upon the question we are now agitating, and they fix the birth of Christ respectively to the spring or the autumn of the year. Which then are we to prefer, for they are both contemporary? There could be no doubt in my mind as to the propriety of bowing to the authority of Clemens himself, were it not for one circumstance. The season of the year at which Clemens fixes the birth of Jesus will, if adopted, throw us into a difficulty which has before been stated, that of making the flight into Egypt take place in the very middle of winter. In this point of view it is more objectionable even than the 25th of December. Upon this account I had rather fix my choice upon the month of April or of May,² which so far as I can see are free from every positive objection, and will afterwards appear to have still further claims upon our attention.

As the ultimate conclusion therefore of this very long discussion, we arrive at J. P. 4709 as the year, and April or May as the month in which the blessed Saviour of the world was most probably born. In other words he *may* have

² We know in fact that a general assessment was afterwards made in Judea *in spring* by Cyrenius after the banishment of Archelaus, J. P. 4720.—“Et sane illa Egyptiorum opinio non facillè respuenda, partim ob antiquitatem ejus, partim quia gens in annorum doctrinâ esset exercitata, taliumque curiosa.” Vossius de Nat. Christi, p. 80.

been born about two years before the death of Herod which took place in the beginning of J. P. 4711, and to confirm this conclusion we have the testimony of Epiphanius in the third century. Epiphanius relates it, apparently as the general opinion of the primitive Christians, that Joseph and Mary remained in Egypt somewhat less than two years.^a Now as we have endeavoured to shew that they went into Egypt only about forty days after the birth of Jesus, continued there not quite two years, and most certainly returned from thence upon the death of Herod, it necessarily follows that Jesus was born about two years before the death of Herod.

^a Ἰωσήφ, says Epiphanius, (Hær., 51, cap. ix. vol. I. p. 431,) ἀποδιᾶράσκει ἅμα τῷ παιδὶ καὶ τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς Ἀίγυπτον, καὶ ἄλλα δύο ἔτη ποιεῖ ἐκεῖσε. It is the expression ἄλλα δύο ἔτη, "other two years," which proves them not to have been complete years; for he is comparing these years with those two imperfect years, which, in his erroneous opinion, intervened between the birth of Christ, and the arrival of the Magi. Therefore they also were imperfect years.

CHAP. IV.

DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING THE PROBABLE DATE
OF THE NATIVITY.

SECTION I.

*To what Taxing St. Luke, ch. ii. v. 1 & 2,
does not allude.*

WE have already determined the *probable* period of our Saviour's birth, and fixed it to the spring of J. P. 4709, that is, about two years before the death of Herod. A third question, which we proposed for discussion, still remains to be considered, and it is this;—whether this probable date corresponds with the other chronological marks which are to be found in the New Testament.

St. Luke is the only one of the sacred historians who has deemed it necessary to furnish his reader with any statement of those chronological marks which might determine the period of the principal transactions of our Saviour's life; and his second

and third chapters are interspersed with such a profusion of these dates as to a casual observer would seem calculated to set the question at rest for ever. It is otherwise,—there is scarcely one of these designations of time which has not afforded to the adversaries of the Gospel a ground of cavil, and to its defenders a task of difficulty.

The present chapter will be occupied in the examination of the only date and the only difficulty deducible from these recorded marks of time in the Gospel of St. Luke, which regards the probable period of our Saviour's *birth*, when considered as unconnected with his baptism.

Εγένετο δὲ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις, ἐξῆλθε δόγμα παρὰ Καίσαρος Αὐγούστου ἀπογράφεσθαι πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην. Αὕτη ἡ ἀπογραφὴ πρώτη ἐγένετο ἡγεμόνεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου.

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.”

Such is the authorized English translation^a of

^a The proper translation of Luke ii. 2. is “This first taxing took place, Cyrenius being governor of Syria;” and so it has uniformly

the first and second verses of the second chapter of St. Luke; and it then proceeds to state, that during this taxing our Saviour was born. Now this is an absolute contradiction not only to that date which we have assigned for the nativity of Jesus, but to that of every other writer, and equally to the vulgar era itself. The vulgar era begins J. P. 4713, but Cyrenius was not sent into Syria as governor until J. P. 4720, seven years at least after the commencement of the vulgar era, and eleven years after the birth of Jesus, J. P. 4709. A contradiction therefore there certainly is, and where are we to look for a solution? There are but four causes to which it can be attributed. 1st, An error in the translation. 2d, A corruption in the reading of the passage. 3d, The

uniformly been understood by the Christian Fathers, and in the more ancient versions, the Syriac, &c. That the writers in those early ages should have gone on from one to another in ignorance of the difficulty which is now universally admitted to exist, and that those acute adversaries of the Gospel, Celsus and Julian, should never have discovered the inconsistency, might astonish us more, were we not acquainted with the egregious errors which in former days were frequently committed by all sorts of writers upon subjects of Chronology and History. The absurdities of Tacitus when speaking of the Jews are too well known to require a repetition, and Justin Martyr, "*regnasse ait Herodem in Judea, quando Ptolomæus Philadelphus libros legis vertendos curavit: qui tantus est sive prochronismus sive metachronismus ut oculis meis, cum illa lego vix credam.*"

mistake of the writer. 4th, Our own ignorance of the means of reconciliation.

1st. The present translation was for a long time universally admitted, and a fault was never discovered until a difficulty was felt. Since that time grammatical distortions and forced interpretations have been multiplied without number, and I am sorry to say also without advantage; for the translation of our English Bibles, or at least one very similar to it, is the only one which the words in their present form seem capable of bearing, and all the proposed improvements are liable to some insuperable objection, and in strict consistency with the rules of grammar and the genius of the Greek language are altogether inadmissible. For if you examine them narrowly, you will find that they are the rude and awkward attempts of men of ingenuity pressed by difficulties, and ready to catch at any means of relief; that, though they remove the historical, they place a grammatical stumbling-block in the way of still greater magnitude; in short, that they are nothing more than the bare assertions of their various inventors, unsupported by any parallel instances either in sacred or profane authors.

Beza seems to have been the first; Casaubon^b

^b Exercit. ad Bar. i. 31.

is the most earnest of those who have endeavoured to reconcile the statement of St. Luke with that of other historians and the real fact, by supposing that Cyrenius was sent into Judea with an extraordinary power and commission for the purpose of making the assessment, and that the word *ἡγεμονεύοντος* refers to that extraordinary commission, and not to the regular office of president of Syria which he afterwards filled; but if we follow this suggestion, and translate the passage accordingly,—“This first enrolment was made by Cyrenius when governing Syria with extraordinary powers,” we not only make St. Luke use the word *ἡγεμονεύοντος* in a sense of extreme ambiguity, but also in one directly contrary to the use he has decidedly made of the same word and form of expression in the first verse of the very next chapter. *Ἡγεμονεύοντος Ποντίου Πιλάτου τῆς Ἰουδαίας* has always and most justly been understood of the actual government of Pontius Pilate; and a deviation from that meaning in the case of Cyrenius could only be justified upon the hypothesis of the author's being ignorant that he afterwards became the ordinary governor of Syria. It would therefore admit the truth of a fact, which is almost all that the most strenuous opposers of Christianity have ever contended for,—an historical mistake on the part of St. Luke.

If on the other hand we adopt the explanation sanctioned by Lardner, and say, that the genuine meaning is, that this was the first taxing of Cyrenius *the governor* of Syria, taking ἡγεμονεύοντος for an official designation, in the same manner as we might speak of the actions of the Protector Cromwell, although speaking of a period previous to his attainment of that situation, we remove indeed the above-mentioned objection, but substitute in its place one still more insurmountable. Lardner in support of this interpretation has produced a variety of passages to shew that the Greek authors frequently made use of participles, when speaking of titles or dignities, a fact which I believe no one will deny, provided the article or some substantive, as *ανηρ*, be prefixed, which is universally the case in the instances quoted by this author.^c ΤΩ βασιλεύοντι Μάρκῳ θυγατέρες μὲν ἐγένοντο πλείους. The article here is absolutely necessary, and the meaning I apprehended would have been completely different had τῷ been omitted, and the words Βασιλεύοντι Μάρκῳ only expressed. Ἀυτὸς δὲ ὑπὸ ΤΟΥ τῆς χώρας ἡγεμονεύοντος δεθείς. Josephus. Καὶ ἦν ὁμολογουμένως ὁ Οὐάρος βασιλικῶ γένους, ἔγγονος Σοέμου ΤΟΥ περὶ Λίβανον τετραρχούντος. The article is here again an essential part of the sentence, and therefore inserted. The

^c Credibility, vol. I. p. 319.

only passage in which the article is actually omitted is one from Dionysius,^d which however Lardner has very justly considered as not particularly appropriate; and upon which he has consequently, by placing it in the margin, shewn that he did not lay much stress:—it runs thus,—“Ὄνομα δὲ κοινὸν οἱ σύμπαντες οὗτοι Λατίνοι ἐκλήθησαν ἐπ’ ΑΝΔΡΟΣ δυναστεύοντος τῶν τόπων Λατίνου. Let this be translated as Lardner proposes,—“The Latins were so called from Latinus a king of that country;” still it is not a parallel instance, nor of the slightest advantage to the case in point, because there is an evident and decided difference between using the participle *δυναστεύων*, absolutely and without any adjunct, in the sense of a king, and using it in that sense when joined to an article or the substantive *ἀνὴρ*, as is here done; at any rate, the arrangement of the Greek text of St. Luke positively forbids our taking his words in this sense. In their present position, and without the article prefixed, *ἡγεμονεύοντος Κυρηνίου*, must necessarily be either a genitive absolute, or depend upon the preposition *ἐπὶ* understood, “either of which” (as Lardner says,^e) “does as fully express Cyrenius’s being president of Syria, as any form of expression can do.”

If, lastly, we coincide with the opinion of

^d Antiq. Rom. lib. ii. p. 76.

^e Credib. vol. I. p. 317.

Herwart, and translate the passage thus,—“This was the first taxing made *before* that by Cyrenius governor of Syria, we must of course take *πρώτη* in the sense of priority as to time, a sense which it certainly bears in one or two instances. Many of the examples produced in proof of this usage of *πρῶτος* are not to the purpose, and many of them have been shewn to be capable of other and perhaps better interpretations. Lardner^f therefore has reduced, and I think justly, to the number of four those which have any pretensions to justify the suggested translation of St. Luke. 1. *Πρὸ τῶν ὄντως ὄντων καὶ τῶν ὅλων ἀρχῶν ἐστὶ θεὸς εἷς, πρῶτος καὶ τοῦ πρώτου θεοῦ καὶ βασιλέως;*^g but perhaps in this instance the word *πρῶτος* ought to be explained rather with a reference to pre-eminence in point of dignity, than priority in point of time, and if so the example is irrelevant. 2. *ἐσχάτῃ τῶν υἱῶν ἡ μήτηρ ἐτελεύτησεν.*^h 3. *καὶ πρῶτος ἐστεφανοῦτο τῶν ἄλλων;*ⁱ but these two latter instances differ from that of St. Luke, inasmuch as *πρῶτος* refers, in both, to a priority over *many*, and not over *one* only, and expresses therefore a comparison between *many*, and not between *two*; according to the rule of Ammonius, *πρῶτος γὰρ ἐπὶ πολλῶν, πρότερος δὲ ἐπὶ δύο.*^k They differ therefore from the

^f Credib. vol. I. p. 312.

^g Jamblich. de Myster. §. 8. cap. 2.

^h 2 Maccab. vii. 41.

ⁱ Dion. Halic. H. R. lib. iv. cap. 3.

^k Lardner. Credib. vol. I. p. 305.

Evangelist, and are only analogous to that expression, ἐσχάτη πάντων, in St. Mark, xii. 22, which is explained by St. Matthew in the corresponding passage, xxii. 27, by the phrase ὕστερον πάντων. 4. ἵνατί οὐκ ἐλογίσθη ὁ λόγος μου πρῶτός μοι τοῦ Ἰούδα ἐπιστρέψαι τὸν βασιλέα ἐμοί;¹ Of all the examples produced this complex construction has the best right to be considered a confirmation of Herwart's opinion. The resemblance however both here and in the passages before cited is defective in one material circumstance, the genitive in all these cases is the genitive of a substantive, which may be distinctly referred to πρῶτος, and cannot indeed possibly admit of any other regimen, or any other sense. Insert the *participle*, read ἐσχάτη, τῶν νιῶν ἡγεμονευόντων, ἡ μήτηρ ἐτελεύτησεν, and ambiguity and obscurity is the immediate result, and the same in each of the other passages. The idea of a genitive absolute is necessarily forced upon the imagination; and I apprehend that, had a participle agreeing with the substantive been found in any of these quotations, there would have been the same doubt about them which there is about the passage of St. Luke, and no one would have ventured to interpret them in the sense they now bear, except compelled to it by some difficulty which he could not otherwise remove. Therefore the verse under our

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 43.

present consideration in order to be parallel ought to have been written as follows :—*αὕτη ἡ ἀπογραφὴ πρώτη ἐγένετο ΤΗΣ^m (ἀπογραφῆς) ἡγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου*; and though I would not positively decide in a point confessedly so intricate, yet I can scarce allow that *πρώτη ἡγεμονεύοντος, κ. τ. έ.* can with propriety be rendered “before Cyrenius was governor of Syria.” It labours besides under this disadvantage, that though it was originally propounded by a writer, who is deservedly held in such high estimation as Scaliger, it was after mature deliberation resigned and rejected by its author as untenable and unsound.ⁿ

2. Since then the contradiction cannot fairly be ascribed to the mis-conception of St. Luke’s translators, it may perhaps reasonably be regarded as arising from some corruption in the text itself, to rectify which we must examine the various emendations which have been proposed by learned men; but from these I am afraid we shall derive very little satisfaction. To substitute *Σατυρνίνου* or *Κοιντιλίου* for *Κυρηνίου*, is to cut, rather than

^m Would there be any great objection to the insertion of *της*, into the text? The codex Beza reads the passage thus, *αὕτη ἡ ἀπογραφὴ ἐγένετο πρώτη ἡγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου*, and after the *τη* in *πρώτη* the eye of the copyist might easily have omitted the word *τῆς*, and passed on to *ἡγεμονεύοντος*.

ⁿ Casaub. Exercit. ad, Bar. i. 32.

and supposing it to have been inadvertently left out by some careless transcriber. But it is evident that nothing could be more easy than the omission of the particle η between $\epsilon\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron$ and $\eta\gamma\epsilon\mu\omicron\nu\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omicron\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$, because the latter word beginning with the same letter the eye of the copyist might inadvertently glide from the one to the other without his ever stopping to consider the meaning of what he wrote : nay, had he even paid the deepest attention to the sense of his author, he might nevertheless, with the very best intentions, have purposely made the alteration; for there is no necessity for supposing a transcriber to be perfectly acquainted with the history of the period to which the work he was copying related. Perceiving therefore that the expression was peculiar and uncommon, and perhaps considering from this peculiarity that it was erroneous,—perceiving also that by the omission of the single letter η a sense perfectly plain and obvious would be obtained,—and considering that, as the following word began with the same letter η , it might possibly have been added by the former transcriber,—perceiving and considering, I say, all these things, it is by no means unnatural to suppose, that some early copyist intentionally omitted the particle to avoid the peculiarity. These arguments will acquire additional force if we adopt the reading of the Cambridge manuscript. In that MS. the arrangement of the words is this:—

αὕτη ἡ ἀπογραφὴ ἐγένετο πρώτη ἡγεμονεύοντος, κ. τ. έ.
 where every one must perceive that πρώτη ending,
 and ἡγεμονεύοντος beginning with an η, had a third
 η been inserted between these two, nothing could
 have been more easy than for a careless transcriber
 to have passed it unobserved, or for an ignorant
 or conceited one to have considered it an interpola-
 tion. Having now proposed one of the slightest
 possible alterations, and, slight as it is, having
 produced several circumstances which render it
 not altogether incredible, I shall next proceed to
 shew, that, presuming it to be as just as it is
 necessary, it fully resolves every doubt, and gives
 to the passage a sense easy and unembarrassed,—
 αὕτη ἡ ἀπογραφὴ πρώτη ἐγένετο ἢ (ἀπογραφὴ ἢ ἐγέν-
 ετο) ἡγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου.—“This
 taxing took place before that which took place
 when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.” Such,
 assuming the proposed emendation, is the form and
 translation of the passage under consideration;
 and it is evident that it is in sufficient conformity
 both in construction and meaning to πρωτότοκος
 ἐγὼ ἢ σύ, to be justified by the resemblance. It
 may chance to be objected, however, that the
 ellipsis is awkward, and that the phrase which is
 to be supplied is too long: but the ellipsis is of
 the simplest form, that which is by grammarians
 called zeugma, an omission only of words which
 have before been used; and in this case had

St. Luke repeated the same or even somewhat different words, he would have been guilty of tautology, without throwing any additional light upon the meaning of the sentence. Thus, by an alteration of the most trivial nature, may the whole be made at once consistent with historical truth. What reception the conjecture (for it is only a conjecture,) may meet with I cannot tell. If the Evangelist had been a mere human and unaided historian, I believe few scruples would have been entertained as to admitting the corruption of the passage, and endeavouring to restore it to its purity by a plausible emendation. Yet the serious Christian must always feel an awful difference between the treatment of a common and a canonical work. There is a respectful deference which is due to the text, as well as to the authority of a sacred writer, and it is no unreasonable opinion to think that God, by the intervention of his providence, has secured the transmission, in all its *requisite* purity, of that revelation which his abundant kindness has condescended to bestow. This, however, admits of some latitude: it is not on this account absolutely necessary that the Old or the New Testament should be free from *every* error, but only from every *material* error,—from every error which might affect the faith or practice of the disciples of Jesus. The distinction is perhaps a nice one, and extremely difficult to reduce to any intelligible

or practical rules : but it has been admitted in all ages, and however nice, can create no doubt whatever as to the admissibility of the modest exercise of critical emendation in the present case, for the passage is merely historical, and, if I may so speak, only *parenthetically* historical ; inserted altogether “ex abundanti” by the writer, and if removed or lost, would never have been regretted.^p If therefore at any time a conjectural

^p St. Luke, chap. ii. ver. 2. is so completely parenthetical and superfluous, and has so much the air of a later insertion, that perhaps, after all, the most reasonable conjecture would be, to suppose it either altogether or in part to be spurious ; and in confirmation of this opinion, I feel much pleasure in being permitted to lay before the reader the following note of a learned Friend, whose name, if mentioned, would bear with it very high authority.

“No satisfactory account has yet been given of the difficulty arising from Luke, chap. ii. ver. 2. Valckenaer supposes it to be an interpolation, and thinks that he finds a confirmation of his opinion in Gregory Nazianzen, Oration ix. T. I. p. 136. where the first and fourth verses are quoted without the second ; but the fact is, that Gregory quotes only what is necessary for his own purpose, so that no argument can be founded on the omission. I am myself inclined to think that the words *ἡγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου* are an interpolation, confessing, however, that the external testimony is against me. Justin Martyr twice mentions Cyrenius as governor of Syria at the time of our Saviour's birth ; but whether he took this from St. Luke's gospel, or the gospel was interpolated from his writings may be disputed.”

To this I would beg leave to add, that there is no improbability whatever in supposing Justin Martyr to have made the mistake, though there is much in attributing it to St. Luke. Of Justin's ignorance of the chronology of the period about our Saviour's birth, we have given a very pregnant instance in a former note.

reading be admissible, it is here. If conjectural emendations were not unpractised even by the most judicious of the Christian Fathers themselves,—if Jerome and Epiphanius have both proposed alterations in the text of the New Testament, and if the former has not scrupled to assert, that through the fault of the transcribers errors have in several places been introduced,⁴ we surely cannot be condemned for any want of reverence in the proposition we have made.

3. I confess then, that without an alteration I cannot reconcile the statement of this passage with the historical records which remain to us of that age; but there may be those who will deem this mode of solution to be equally, if not more objectionable, than those distorted translations which we have ventured to condemn. We must therefore see whether there is any reason to suppose that the writer himself was under a mistake.

To settle this matter at once in the negative, and give an answer which may not only apply to the present, but also to every other similar diffi-

⁴ “Nos nomen Esaie putamus additum, scriptorum vitio, quod et in aliis locis probare possumus.” Jerom as quoted by Casaubon. Exercit. ad Bar. i. 28. p. 116. Comment. in Matth. c. iii. v. 3.

culty, it may be useful and sufficient to observe, that the dates of St. Luke are of such a character as to preclude the possibility of our supposing that the Evangelist was either an impostor by design, or mistaken through ignorance. It is the custom with deceivers to dwell upon broad and general facts alone, to take those leading and universally acknowledged characters and dates which every one will perceive, and no one doubt. This they do because, as I have before observed, their object is *immediate* success, which would be checked rather than promoted by a contrary mode of proceeding. Examine then the Gospel of St. Luke by this rule, and mark the difference. Instead of loosely stating that it was in the reign of Tiberius that the word of the Lord came unto John, he discriminates the very year of that reign, and leads us to the very portion of the year by coupling it with the government of Pontius Pilate; instead of recording only who was the Roman Emperor at the time, of which no one could be in ignorance, he adds the insignificant tetrarchy of Lysanias and Abilene, a ruler and a dominion which it has demanded the scrutinising enquiries of learning to elicit from the scanty documents of the history of that age.^r Instead of contenting himself with one undisputed fact, he has drawn together several

^r Casaub. Exercit. ad Bar. xiii. 3.

from different sources, and of different kinds. But the most unequivocal mark of his veracity is in the notice which he has taken of *two* Jewish High Priests. That there was one, and one only, in every period of the Jewish commonwealth, who was in the actual possession of that high and important office, is notorious to every reader of the Holy Scriptures, yet St. Luke has bestowed the title equally upon two.—Why he has done so it is not my present purpose to decide; but I ask, whether, if his intention had been, like that of every impostor, to conciliate the belief of his readers, he could have ventured upon the assertion of such an anomalous fact, even though aware that the statement was perfectly correct. Would he not have feared the prejudice, which the doubts of those who were ignorant of the propriety of the appellation being applied both to Annas and Caiaphas, would necessarily create in the minds of many? Or had he purposely given the title of *αρχιερεως* to both, from an affectation of superior accuracy, would he not have endeavoured to stamp the authenticity of the proposition by some hint as to the sense in which the word was to be accepted, and the limitations which were necessary to reconcile it with the actual state of things? But St. Luke has simply stated the circumstance with the confidence of a man at once acquainted with the truth, and conscious of his own honesty; and by that

proceeding has established his claims, with every candid mind, to the title of a contemporaneous and faithful historian. There is a similar singularity in the writings of Josephus, capable of being made conducive to a similar conclusion. Who does not know that there was but one Roman governor of Syria? Yet Josephus speaks of *two*, and gives to both the same denomination of ἡγέμων.* A forger of a history of that period would never have ventured upon such a statement; or, had he inserted it, would have carefully distinguished between the powers of Volumnius and Saturninus by a corresponding difference of designation. Hence I conclude, that in both passages the true method of solution is, by giving to the words ἀρχιερεὺς and ἡγέμων, as applied to Annas and Volumnius, an interpretation subordinate to their highest and proper significations; and feel convinced, that in both cases the writers were faithful men, writing for the information of others, according to their own belief, and without any intention whatever to deceive.

If St. Luke was not an intentional deceiver, he was not an ignorant writer. What is the declaration of his preface? That he had enquired diligently into the subject of his history. This, under

* Antiq. lib. xvi. cap. 16. p. 576. E.

our present hypothesis, is the testimony of an honest man; and we know that he had opportunities enough of obtaining all the knowledge he wanted or might wish. It is not therefore lightly to be supposed that he would immediately proceed to falsify his declaration by collecting a multiplicity of dates of the correctness of which he was not thoroughly aware. It is not easily to be believed that he had made such imperfect examinations into the chronology of the events he records, as to be mistaken in those designations of time upon which he evidently depended for instructing his reader in the periods of such an important life as that of the author of his religion and his hopes. Whether there are to be found in his Gospel any of those errors "*quas aut incuria fudit, aut humana parum cavit natura*," is another question, to be resolved only by an inquiry into the extent of his inspiration. I lay that at present entirely out of consideration, and looking upon him only as an unassisted historian, I say that to imagine St. Luke to have been ignorant of the time and nature of the transactions he relates, or inattentive to the acquisition of the best information in his power upon a circumstance so intimately connected with the subject of which he was treating, is, from the reasonings already insisted upon, the most improbable, and therefore the last supposition we should embrace. The

taxing of Cyrenius was too recent, and, from several memorable and calamitous causes, too deeply imprinted upon the mind of every Jew to be forgotten or mistaken. It is therefore infinitely more probable that both the present and every other difficulty, with which his Gospel is clogged, should there be any to be found which are absolutely irreconcilable with other writers, are irreconcilable rather on account of our ignorance than his. The loss of historical documents, and the imperfect records which have reached us of those times, are much more likely causes of the apparent contradictions which may (I will not say, do) exist, than any presumed inattention, or want of information on the part of the Evangelist himself. It is having much too high an opinion of our own knowledge of ancient history to suppose, that what we cannot harmonize must be absolutely false.

4. The fourth method of solution is now the only one remaining to us, and to that we must in the last place apply. We must account for the apparent contradiction by our own ignorance of the mode of reconciliation, and so conclude that St. Luke did not originally mean to declare that Jesus was born under the taxing made by Cyrenius, after the banishment of Archelaus, but under

some other and previous ἀπογραφή. This is not a conclusion to which we are driven only from the impossibility of finding any other resource, though, under the circumstances of the case, it would even in that point of view be entitled to much consideration. It is in fact an inference which, to all appearance, is very strongly fortified by the authority of Tertullian, who certainly seems to have either read or understood St. Luke in a different manner from that in which he is now read and understood.

In his fourth book against Marcion the heretic and the 19th chapter, Tertullian has made the following remark. "Census constat actos sub Augusto tunc in Judeâ per Sentium Saturninum." Now whatever explanation we may choose to give to the words "per Sentium Saturninum,"—whether we suppose them to mean that this census was taken under the presidency of Saturninus, a sense, which is both false in fact, and, though sanctioned by Casaubon, yet too harsh even for the rough pen of Tertullian, or whether we more naturally and literally interpret the phrase as implying that Saturninus was the agent in it's execution; in both these cases it is evident that the writer could not have supposed St. Luke in chap. ii. ver. 2, to be speaking of that taxing which was made upon the banishment of Archelaus. That taxing was

made not only under the government of Cyrenius, but also by Cyrenius, and could not therefore in any sense be said to be taken “per Sentium Saturninum.” I am far from thinking with some that Tertullian read *Σατουρνίνου* where we now read *Κυρηνίου* in St. Luke, or maintaining that he was right in imagining that Saturninus had any thing to do with the *ἀπογραφὴ* which took place at our Saviour’s birth. It will afterwards appear probable that Saturninus was at that time in Rome. What I would maintain is simply this, that Tertullian would never have boldly asserted that the *ἀπογραφὴ* at our Saviour’s birth was taken “per Sentium Saturninum,” had he read and understood the passage of St. Luke in the same manner in which we now read and understand it, as referring to that *ἀπογραφὴ* which was made under the government of Cyrenius. He might be ignorant or mistaken with regard to the person by whom the census was really taken, but he would never have ventured to assign it to one particular individual in direct contradiction to the testimony of an Evangelist. Hence it is highly probable that the difficulty which we now experience from the mention of Cyrenius in St. Luke’s Gospel, did not then exist, though whether from a different reading or interpretation of the passage we cannot tell. The objection therefore, so far as it affects the accuracy of St. Luke is

removed, and we must be content to confess, that it arises from our ignorance of the proper mode of solution,—our ignorance either of the true reading, or the true interpretation of his text.

SECTION II.

*To what Taxing St. Luke, ch. ii. v. 1 & 2,
probably alludes.*

I HAVE endeavoured in the preceding section to prove from various considerations, that it is highly *improbable* that an honest and well-informed historian like St. Luke should have confounded the taxing under the government of Cyrenius, with the ἀπογραφὴ which took place at our Saviour's birth ;—that it is highly *probable* that Tertullian did not read or understand the second verse of the second chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke in the same manner in which we now read and understand it ;—and that we are consequently authorized to infer that the difficulty which is now created by that verse did not then exist, though whether we are to attribute its present existence to a corruption in the reading, or to a mis-conception of the meaning of the passage, I do not presume to say. I am rather inclined to refer it to the former cause, and to suspect that the verse is in part at least, the interpolation of some later transcriber. I shall

next endeavour to point out that ἀπογραφὴ to which St. Luke most probably did allude, and to shew that, by its correspondence in point of circumstances and time, it sufficiently confirms—confirms as much as it could reasonably be expected to do—the date we have by an induction of particulars already assigned for the nativity of Jesus.

Suidas^a under the word ἀπογραφὴ relates, that Augustus sent out twenty men throughout the empire to make an assessment of persons and estates. But besides the error which he afterwards commits of supposing this to have been the *first* census, so little is known of the compiler of the Lexicon of Suidas, except that he lived and wrote after the 975th year of the Christian era, that no dependence is to be placed upon his testimony, except when confirmed by some more ancient and credible historian. In this case indeed a confirmation has been supposed^b to exist in a passage of Dio, who observes that Augustus ἐπεμψεν ἄλλους ἄλλη τά τε τῶν ιδιωτῶν καὶ τὰ τῶν πολέων κτήματα ἀπογραφασμένους. But this refers exclusively to a transaction connected with a tax upon Roman citizens alone, whereas the ἀπογραφὴ of St. Luke compre-

^a Lardner. Credib. vol. I. 521.

^b See Casaubon Exercit, i. 31, by whom the argument is urged, and Lardner vol. I. 249-50, by whom it is refuted.

hends all the inhabitants of Judea, whether Romans or not. The same objection holds with regard to identifying St. Luke's taxing with any of the three Roman censuses which Augustus is known to have completed in the 28th and 8th years before, and in the 14th year after, the Christian era. We may therefore confine our attention to those traces of ἀπογραφὰι during the reign of Herod and Augustus, which embraced in their operation, either all the subjects of the Roman empire, or at least all the land of Judea, a more limited signification of the expression *πάσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην*, which is fully justified by another passage^c of St. Luke, in which it is evident from the arguments of Lardner,^d and the circumstances and context, that it cannot be explained without absurdity in a more extended sense.

Now in the 17th book of the Antiquities of Josephus there exists a passage to the following effect,^e—"When the whole Jewish nation took an oath to be faithful to Cæsar, and the interests of

^c Acts xi. 28.

^d Lardner, vol. I. 240-46, with the notes. The discussion affords one of the most favourable specimens of Lardner's prolix manner; but I wish he had embodied the notes in the text. They are quite as essential, and in their present situation only break the train of reasoning and distract the reader's attention.

^e Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 3, p. 585-6.

the King, the Pharisees to the number of above six thousand refused to swear. The King having laid a fine upon them, the wife of Pheroras paid the money for them."

Lamy has alluded to this transaction. Allix has insisted upon it, and Lardner,¹ by pursuing it through all its various ramifications, has created, rather than discovered, some fanciful points of resemblance between it and the taxing of St. Luke, which have a tendency to weaken an argument which is naturally calculated to convey light and strength to the narrative of the Evangelist. I shall select those marks of correspondence which appear to be well founded, and add such other observations as have occurred in the course of the examination.

That the Cæsar mentioned by Josephus was Augustus, and Herod the King, needs no proof. This is the first circumstance of similitude between the oath of Josephus and the ἀπογραφὴ of St. Luke. The second is, that the oath of Josephus, like the taxing of St. Luke, occurred in the latter part of Herod's reign; and the third, that both applied to all the inhabitants of Judea who were of the seed

¹ Lamy. App. Chron. Part I. cap. 10. p. 83. Allix. cap. 3. Lardner. Credib. lib. ii. cap. 1.

of Abraham,—παντὸς τοῦ Ἰουδαϊκοῦ. Joseph. πασᾶν τὴν οἰκουμένην. Luc. The fourth is, that the oath indisputably involved an universal ἀπογραφὴ^s or enrolment of names; for it would have been impossible without such an enrolment to have ascertained whether the whole nation had or had not taken the oath. Fifthly, in order to ascertain this point, some arrangement must have been made to prevent deception and error, and that could only be by individuals taking the oath in the places of their residence, or the cities and villages in which their birth and pedigree were entered. With the usual customs of the Jews the latter is much more consistent, and therefore more probable, and in more strict correspondence with the Evangelist. Again, it does not appear that taking the oath of fidelity was the whole of the transaction. Josephus does not say—“When a decree was made, that the whole Jewish nation should take an oath,” but simply—“When the whole Jewish nation took an oath.” There is nothing in this to contradict the supposition that a regular edict might have been issued for a taxing or ἀπογραφὴ, and the oath have been required at the same time, as being a more favourable opportunity for the execution of such a purpose. A decree therefore might have gone forth “that all the land should be taxed,” or en-

^s ἀπογραφὴ ἢ ἀπαρίθμησις. Suidas.

rolled according to St. Luke; and on the same occasion, "all the Jewish nation might have taken an oath," according to Josephus. Sixthly, whether the decree was for an assessment, in its proper sense, or only for an enrolment, for the sake of the oath, it must have proceeded from Augustus, as is stated by St. Luke. That Herod would, by his own decree, unnecessarily risk the little hold he had on the affections of his subjects, or express thus publicly and needlessly his subordination to Cæsar by requiring the Jews to declare their allegiance to the Romans, of which they abhorred the very name, is altogether incredible. But that it should be done by Augustus, in the present juncture of Herod's affairs, when, as has been shewed by several learned men, he was in a state of suspicion and degradation at Rome, is highly probable. Both these inferences are strengthened by the nature and terms of the oath itself. They did not swear to be faithful to the King and to Cæsar, which would have been the natural style of Herod; but to Cæsar and the King, and the precedence in order seems to mark the source of the command. Again, they swore to be faithful to the *person* of Cæsar, but only to the *interests* of the King, τοῖς βασιλέως πράγμασι, thus merging their loyalty to his person in their attachment to his affairs, which were of course the affairs of the nation at large. Neither did they mention the

name of Herod at all in their oath,—they swore only to be faithful to the interests of *the King*, that is, the King of the Jews, whoever he might be. This branch of the oath being coupled with an acknowledgment of their submission to Cæsar seems to me to imply an oath of fidelity to any person whom the Emperor might choose to substitute in the room of Herod, as well as to Herod himself, and thus marks in a most distinct manner the humiliating situation in which he stood. In the English oath of allegiance, before the revolution, there was a similar ambiguity, which is now removed by our swearing allegiance not only to the King, as formerly, but exclusively to King George. 'The demand of such an oath must have been the Emperor's act, and this is still further evidenced by the trivial penalty inflicted by Herod upon the recusants. Those, who know any thing of Herod, know that he was not accustomed to permit a disobedience to *his* commands, more especially when it implied any tendency to rebellion against his sovereign authority, to be passed over without dreadful retribution. In this case more than six thousand refused to swear, and he merely fined them; and the fine was so slight, that the wife of Pheroras was willing and able immediately to discharge it. Was such a fine an adequate punishment for so formidable an example of resistance to the King's own decree, or sufficient to

deter others from throwing off their allegiance? Had Herod considered this oath in the light of an oath of fidelity to himself and his government, or had it been issued in his own authority and name, their punishment would have been death, or at any rate much more severe than a fine; and they would have deserved it. If it came from Augustus, Herod, in his present state, after Augustus had declared that for the future he would treat him not as a friend, but as a subject, was of course compelled to appear at least to resent the disobedience of the Pharisees, whilst by his lenity he displayed how little he was in reality affected by it. The demand of such an oath *was* treating Herod as a subject, and a decree for that oath could have proceeded from no one but Augustus, and without a decree it never could have been demanded at all. The decree for the oath therefore, like the decree for the ἀπογραφή, proceeded from “Cæsar Augustus.” This is a strong point of resemblance. But, seventhly, whilst the mildness of the punishment for a refusal to comply with the demand, shews that Herod disliked the thing, it also shews, that between the decree and its execution the anger of Augustus had somewhat abated; for without that he would not have ventured, however desirous, to be so lenient. And this was actually the case; for the oath was not taken till after the council at Berytus, before which Augustus had become more

reconciled to Herod. Eighthly, Josephus mentions the fact because it was connected, and necessary to render what followed intelligible, and St. Luke mentions it for the same reason. Josephus *merely* mentions it, and without any comment, probably because Nicholas of Damascus, from whom he copied, had done the same, being anxious, in his friendship for Herod, to take as little notice as possible of a transaction which reflected no honor upon the King, and was a disagreeable recollection to every Jew. St. Luke enters somewhat more into particulars, because he could not otherwise have given a satisfactory account of the presence of Joseph and Mary at Bethlehem. These circumstances are in my opinion decisive, though they have not been properly attended to. Lastly, this, according to Josephus, is the *first* transaction of the kind which took place in Judea, and it is styled ΠΡΩΤΗ ἀπογραφή, by St. Luke.

The sequel to the passage which I have already quoted will be found equally useful. It runs nearly thus,—“The Pharisees, in requital for the kindness of Pheroras’s wife, in paying their fine, foretold (for they were supposed by their intimacy with God to have attained the gift of foreknowledge) that, God having decreed to put an end to the government of Herod and his race, the kingdom

would be transferred to her, and Pheroras, and their children. Salome, who was ignorant of none of these things, came and told the King of them, and assured him likewise, that many of the court were corrupted by them. Then the King put to death the most guilty of the Pharisees, and Bagoas the eunuch, and one Carus the most beautiful young man about the court, and the great instrument in the King's unlawful pleasures. He likewise slew every one in his own family who adhered to those things which were said by the Pharisees. But Bagoas had been elevated by them in that he should be called father and benefactor of the King who was to be appointed according to their prediction, (for all things would be in his power,) being to give him a capacity of marriage, and of having children of his own."

Nothing has ever more surprised me than the observations of Lardner^h upon this part of the incident. He seems in this instance to have departed so completely from the usual judgment and caution of his character, that I cannot account for his hallucinations by any of his known habits or principles. That he believed his inferences to be true is not to be disputed. There is a fulness and open simplicity about his style which always

^h Ubi supra.

evince his sincerity: yet his opinions have in this case so little solid foundation, that, had they proceeded from any other writer of less credit, I should have felt authorized to pass them over in total silence. But I look with such unfeigned respect upon every *critical* conclusion of Lardner, that I dare not omit the statement of their nature and proofs,—I shall do it as briefly as possible.

In one word then, Lardner imagines that the whole account of this transaction in Josephus is little more than a disguised, perhaps an intentionally disguised, and absurd narration of what occurred in Jerusalem upon the arrival and question of the Magi. “Josephus’s account is a perfect comment upon St. Matthew.” The prediction of the Pharisees, he says, was in fact the prediction produced by the council of priests and scribes out of Micah, in answer to Herod’s question, ii. 4, 5,—“Thou, Bethlehem,—out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel.” He conceives, also, that it may have some allusion to the prophecies of Simeon and Anna, and that the putting to death the Pharisees, Bagoas the eunuch, and several of his own family was only a part of the Bethlehem massacre, and took place at the same time.—To give some colour of proof to this idea, and create the semblance of identity between transactions so dissimilar in the persons to whom

they refer, he half conjectures that Josephus has introduced the care and cautions of Salome to Herod by way of jest,—that the promise to Bagoas was his own invention, or an old piece of hackneyed wit,—that he speaks of the affair in a very indecent way,—that he justifies and triumphs in these terrible executions,—and that he banters the Pharisees, under their very heavy sufferings, for pretending to the gift of foreknowledge. As to what Lardner says about Bagoas and Salome, they are merely conjectures, without one shadow of a defence,—as to the indecent way in which Josephus writes, I never could find it out,—and as to his “being so merry in the main passage,” I think the merriment is all of Lardner’s own making. I have often read the passage with a smile at the recollection of his very curious comments, but I never remember its having created the smallest tendency to laughter before I became acquainted with the “Credibility.” But Lardner seems to rest his main defence on the following argument,—that Pheroras or his wife, or any one issuing from them, was the chief subject of the Pharisees’ prediction, he will not believe, “because it is inconsistent with the rest of Josephus’s story.” The inconsistency is first in Pheroras, or his wife, or his children not being punished, &c.; but what ground was there for punishment? Josephus states that the Pharisees

had uttered these predictions, but says nothing as to any steps having been taken by those to whom they referred. He states however, that Herod put to death "*all* of his own family who adhered to those things which were spoken by the Pharisees." Pheroras and his wife, therefore, not having been put to death, may be supposed not to have been known to have adhered to those things. Why then should it be strange that they were not punished without a crime? As to Antipater's treating them with confidence after the utterance of these predictions, I can only wonder that Lardner, who had read Josephus with care, could have forgotten for a moment that intimate connection in wickedness which subsisted between them, and their joint efforts against Herod's life. But, secondly, he says the prophecies are in themselves contradictory; even if they were, it is nothing to the purpose. Doubtless the Pharisees were sufficiently versed in the fabrication of false prophecies to know, that the more marvellous the better; and sufficiently acquainted with human nature to know, that the more completely an imagination deviates from the common operations of the human understanding, the more liable are the vulgar to attribute it to supernatural communication. I cannot, however, think there is any absurdity. The prediction first states, that the kingdom is to be transferred to Pheroras, his wife, and their issue. It then

speaks of one King, in whose power all things would be. Interpret this only in common fairness of latitude, and it evidently means, that one of the issue of Pheroras, to whom the kingdom was to be transferred from Herod and his race, should be that great King, who was then generally looked for. Such captious cavilling might, and indeed has been made subservient to the eliciting contradictions from the sure word of prophecy itself. It appears, therefore, that Lardner has discovered none of those inconsistencies of which he speaks, "as a certain sign that an historian has indulged his fancy or his passions, and gone into fiction." On the contrary, I look upon the whole passage as containing a piece of grave and faithful history; detailing circumstances which actually occurred, and which are *distinct* from the prophecies relative to the birth of Jesus, whether uttered in the council by the chief priests and scribes, or in the temple by Simeon and Anna. I hold that the Pharisees *did* utter their predictions in favour of Bagoas, Pheroras, his wife and her family, most probably in the hope that, like many other predictions, they might have the merit of working out their own fulfilment, by exciting the people to a general insurrection for the accomplishment of the object foretold. That the Pharisees were punished by Herod's orders with death for their presumption is undeniable. These facts being

admitted, I am now to shew how they confirm the transactions at our Saviour's birth and presentation; and prove the taxing of St. Luke to be the same in point of fact with the oath of Josephus.

The leading observation which the transaction suggests is, the very different measure of punishment which was dealt out to these prophesying Pharisees, and to those who refused to take the prescribed oath. The latter were fined only, though resisting an oath of allegiance to Herod, as the then king of the Jews,—the former were put to death neither for seditious actions nor seditious words, but for idle and absurd predictions of evil. Why the former were treated with such lenity we have already seen. That this gentleness should have now been changed into such extreme and unrelenting severity, can be attributed, I think, only to some *intermediate* occurrence which had rendered Herod peculiarly sensible to any allusion to the expected and triumphant King who should rule over his own kingdom of Judea or Israel. Now there is no circumstance whatever upon record, which could or did produce such effects upon Herod's mind, except the arrival of the Magi,—none which was so likely to suggest such predictions to the imagination of the Pharisees,—none which was so likely to make those predic-

tions of serious and dangerous consequence,—none by which Herod's jealousy was so effectually roused. Suppose then that the Magi arrived after the taking of the oath, and that the Pharisees uttered these predictions shortly after their abrupt departure and the declarations of Simeon and Anna, and consequently during that period of Herod's life in which he is described by the Evangelist as seeking the life of the child Jesus, and all the importance which he attributed to the marvellous declarations of the Pharisees about the future King and Bagoas, and all the severity with which he avenged their ravings, are easily accounted for. *They* drew the substance of their prophecies from the questions of the Magi, and the words of Simeon and Anna, knowing that at that moment every thing connected with that subject would be greedily listened to; and this accounts for the similarity between the two predictions. *Herod* punished them with death, because his recent disappointment made him tremblingly alive to any new alarms of a prophetic nature upon that subject; and this accounts for the faint resemblance which these executions bear to the massacre of Bethlehem. Hence I conceive that the visit of the Magi had *intervened* between the oath and the predictions and punishment of the Pharisees, and thus we gain another very strong presumptive proof of the identity

of the taxing of St. Luke and the oath of Josephus.

The whole argument in favour of their identity may be briefly summed up in the following terms :

1. In every leading point, the oath mentioned by Josephus very strongly resembles the ἀπογραφὴ mentioned by St. Luke.

2. There is not one single circumstance in which they can be said to be absolutely and irreconcilably dissimilar.

It would therefore seem to be by no means improbable to suppose that they *might be* the same.

3. The ἀπογραφὴ mentioned by St. Luke, and the massacre of Bethlehem, were events which followed very closely upon one another.

The oath mentioned by Josephus, and the execution of the Pharisees, &c. were also events which followed very closely upon one another.

4. The visit of the Magi intervened between the ἀπογραφὴ mentioned by St. Luke, and the massacre of Bethlehem.

The visit of the Magi appears also to have intervened between the oath mentioned by Josephus, and the execution of the Pharisees &c.¹

Hence it would seem highly probable that the oath mentioned by Josephus, and the ἀπογραφὴ mentioned by St. Luke *were* the same.

¹ The massacre of Bethlehem and the execution of the Pharisees, &c. might also, by a similar process of reasoning, have been concluded to be the same, had not the *subjects* of the two been absolutely dissimilar. In *time* they probably corresponded very nearly to each other, but the persons put to death in each were different,—innocent infants in the one case; Bagoas, Carus, the Pharisees, and the guilty part of Herod's own family in the other.

SECTION III.

*The Date of the Taxing to which St. Luke,
ch. ii. v. 2, probably alludes.*

FORTIFIED by the various negative and positive arguments, which form the substance of the preceding section, I feel myself authorized to regard Josephus as speaking under the term *oath* of the same transaction as that of which the Evangelist speaks under the term ἀπογραφή. Now it was during this ἀπογραφή or oath that our Saviour was born. Our next effort must therefore be directed to gather from the pages of the Jewish historian the *date* of the oath or ἀπογραφή, and by that date either refute or confirm the conclusion of the last chapter with regard to the date of our Lord's nativity.

It has been observed that the taking of the oath, like the birth of Jesus, occurred towards the end of Herod's life and reign ; but this is not sufficient ; we want something more precise. Now the execution of the Rabbies on the 13th of March,

J. P. 4710, will be found invaluable upon this, as upon many other occasions. It is a fixed point from which with perfect security we may reckon either backwards or forwards. Let us therefore adopt it for that purpose now, making a retrograde calculation to the time of the oath, which preceded it by a considerable space.

From the execution of the Rabbies to the sending off the second set of deputies to Rome relative to the case of Antipater, is, as we have before seen, about a month. That brings us to the middle of February, J. P. 4710. Now between the taking of the oath and this last-mentioned date Josephus places the following events, and in the following order:

1stly, The punishment by death of the prophesying Pharisees: this has already been determined to have been inflicted a little more than forty days after the taking of the oath; for it took place a little after the arrival and departure of the Magi, which was forty days after the taxing or oath.

2dly, "Herod, having punished the Pharisees, summons a council, and lays an accusation against the wife of Pheroras."^a For these two circum-

^a Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 3. p. 586.

stances together we shall not perhaps be far wrong if we allow about *fifty* days.

3dly, Antipater, alarmed by this proceeding towards his accomplice, and beginning to suspect his father's intentions towards himself, "writes to his friends in Rome, enjoining them to write to Herod, that he would send Antipater as quickly as possible to Cæsar; which being done, Herod did send Antipater." Now this matter was one of despatch; quickness, readiness in the execution of every part was required and used. I cannot therefore grant the interval between the accusation of Pheroras and the departure of Antipater for Rome to have been more than six weeks or two months; consequently, by adding the above-mentioned fifty days to these six weeks or two months it appears, that Antipater set off for Rome a little more than *three months* after the taking of the oath.

4thly, Shortly after Antipater's departure poison was administered to Pheroras by his wife, and he died. "This," says Josephus, "was the beginning of evils to Antipater, *who was already sailed for Rome.*"^b He had not therefore long sailed, and a fortnight seems full time enough

^b Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 5.

to place between Antipater's departure and the death of Pheroras.

5thly, The investigations, which Herod was induced to enter into as to the cause and authors of the death of his brother Pheroras, led to the discovery of Antipater's designs and guilt,—that having prepared a deadly poison he had given it to Pheroras, with an injunction to administer it to his father during his absence." Herod pursued the enquiry with great diligence, collecting or forcing information from every quarter. During the whole of this period not one word of these interesting proceedings was communicated to Antipater at Rome, although they occupied a period of more than six months; so much was he hated, and so strictly were all the means and avenues of communication closed.—"It is remarkable," says Josephus, "that though in the course of the *seven* preceding months so many things had been agitated against him, with not one of them had he been made acquainted."^c

6thly, While the scrutiny into his conduct and conspiracy was in progress, Antipater employed various artifices to exasperate Herod against others, and "wrote himself a letter to his father" with the

^c Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 6. p. 589. F.

same view.^d Herod, in returning an answer, concealed his discoveries and anger, and requested him “not to loiter on his journey.” “This letter Antipater met with in Cilicia,” being thus far on his return to Judea. After some slight hesitation he resolved to proceed immediately, and having reached Jerusalem, was summoned to take his trial the *very next day* before Herod and Quintilius Varus, “who had been sent as successor to Saturninus in the government of Syria. His guilt was decided the *same day*, “and the *following day* Varus departed for Antioch. Herod *immediately* put his son under confinement; and having imprisoned him sent off letters and a deputation to Cæsar about him.” These circumstances I conceive to be included in the seven months mentioned in the previous paragraph: but if they are not to be considered as a portion of that period, it is evident they could not extend more than a week beyond it. But though I am so strongly inclined to the first idea, yet the addition of this single week will make so slight a difference in my ultimate conclusion, that I shall not omit it in my calculation.

7thly, These were the *first* letters and messengers which Herod sent. Immediately after their

^d Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 7.

departure^c Herod made some further discoveries, which induced him to despatch a second deputation for the same purpose, and with similar accusations and requests. This brings us to the commencement of his illness, about the middle of February, (the 13th) J. P. 4710, and these are all the circumstances which occurred according to Josephus between the taking of the oath and that date. It is very remarkable that, in this part of his history, there are more numerous, and more distinct and unequivocal marks of time than I remember to have met with in any other portion of equal length. Let us now see how they correspond with our opinion respecting the identity of the oath and the taxing or birth of Christ, which we have assigned to the spring of J. P. 4709.

Now in the first place it is evident, that we have accounted for *nine* complete months between the oath and the 13th of February, J. P. 4710, *three* from the oath to the departure of Antipater for Rome, and *six* for the time occupied in collecting the evidence relative to his guilt. To these we must add that portion of the seventh month which is not specified, but which was also occupied in the collection of evidence; a similar

^c Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 7. p. 595.

excess above the three months which elapsed between the oath and the departure of Antipater for Rome ; a week between sending off the first and second letters and deputation ; and *perhaps* a week between the completion of the collection of the evidence, and the arrival of Antipater and his trial at Jerusalem. These fractions may altogether amount to somewhat more than a month, which, added to the other nine, gives a little more than ten months, as the utmost period which intervened between the oath and the commencement of Herod's illness on the 13th of February, J. P. 4710. Hence it appears, that the oath took place a little more than ten months before the 13th of February, J. P. 4710. Now the 13th of February, J. P. 4710 - 10 months = 13th of April, J. P. 4709. This computation, therefore, assigns to the oath the very same date which our previous and independent reasonings have concluded to be the most probable date of our Saviour's nativity. Therefore the oath and the taxing being the same, and Christ being born during the taxing, that conclusion is confirmed. Yet is the computation not absolutely adverse to those who would place them either in May or March ; a little more or a little less time than we have allowed for might have been easily consumed in the events which succeeded each other, and our computation

may not therefore be free from all inaccuracy. But of this I feel tolerably secure, that the error, as to any important purposes to which we may wish to apply the date, will be found altogether immaterial. It will still fix the nativity of Jesus to the early part of J. P. 4709.



SECTION IV.

An Objection to the Correctness of the preceding Calculations and Date considered and answered.

I AM aware of only one objection which can be fairly urged against the correctness of the preceding calculations, and it may be stated in the following terms.

When Antipater was sent to Rome by his father, Josephus states that “together with Antipater there went to Rome Syllæus the Arabian,” who was accused of several things by Antipater and Aretas. Josephus then proceeds to relate the origin of these accusations, and mentions Corinthus and two other Arabians, accomplices of Syllæus, who had been seized and examined and confessed themselves guilty before Herod.—Herod had informed Saturninus of every thing, and “so Saturninus,” (says Josephus,) “upon Herod’s discovering the whole to him, sent *them* to Rome.”^a

^a Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 4. p. 586, 587. See also de Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 18. p. 764.

It is argued from this passage that Saturninus was actually President of Syria when Antipater set off for Rome, because his name is mentioned by Josephus *after* this departure.—But, according to our calculations, Antipater did not leave Judea for Rome until about three months after the taking of the oath, that is, until about the month of June, J. P. 4709, at which time Varus,^b and not Saturninus, was President of Syria. Our cal-

^b Chronologers have entertained very different sentiments about the period at which Varus became President of Syria, but the question has been set at rest for ever by Pagi, who has fixed the year by a careful comparison of some coins of Varus with others of Tiberius, from the latter of which he has determined, with a precision and certainty that are irresistible, the true commencement of the Antiochian era.

1. There are in existence some coins of Varus, as President of Syria, which bear date in the 25th year of the Antiochians, and this is the *earliest* date that has been found upon any of his coins. Hence it may be concluded that he was made President in, and not before, the 25th year of that era, because the commencement of the government of Kings and Presidents was usually marked by the honour of an *immediate* coinage. The treatises upon coins contain some rather curious effects of the extreme haste of the masters of the mints to celebrate the accession of a new ruler, more especially in the provinces. These effects consist in joining the *reverse* of a preceding reign to an *obverse* bearing the head of the new-raised Governor. It is therefore to be supposed that the 25th year of the Antiochians was the *first* of the Presidency of Varus, because the *first* coins of Varus are dated in that year.

2. There are coins in existence which prove, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the era of Antioch began on the day of the battle of Actium, that is, Sept. 2, J. P. 4683.—Now J. P. 4683 + 25 = J. P. 4708. Therefore Varus became President of
Syria

culations, therefore, it may be said, are incorrect, because they contradict the statement of Josephus, by making Varus instead of Saturninus President of Syria at the time of Antipater's departure for Rome.

The following remarks will, I think, entirely remove this objection :

1. We may observe that the word *them*, under which Josephus comprehends all those who were sent by Saturninus to Rome, refers only to Corinthus and the two other Arabians, the accomplices of Syllæus, and by no means includes Syllæus himself. Those accomplices might therefore have been sent to Rome by Saturninus some time before Syllæus accompanied Antipater. I very much question indeed whether Saturninus could, under any circumstances, have had the power of thus disposing of Syllæus. Syllæus had been the principal minister of Obodas the late king of Arabia, and would seem by that office to have been completely out of the jurisdiction of the President of Syria.

2. Though the circumstance of these accomplices of Syllæus having been sent to Rome

Syria before the 2d of Sept. J. P. 4708, and after the 2d of Sept. J. P. 4707. See Pagi Appar. Chronol. in Bar. p. 33, and Crit. in Bar. p. 14.

by Saturninus, when President of Syria, is related by Josephus after the departure of Antipater for Rome, it does not follow that they were actually sent off after the departure of Antipater. The circumstance is related to account for Syllæus having accompanied Antipater to Rome. It is stated as the cause of his going, and the foundation of the accusations which were laid against him. It must therefore necessarily have taken place some time before, and consequently by no means proves that, when Syllæus followed those accomplices to Rome, Saturninus was still the President of Syria. Saturninus might have quitted his official situation, as President of Syria, in the interval between the departure of these accomplices and the subsequent departure of Syllæus and Antipater.

3. That Saturninus had actually quitted the administration of affairs in Syria a considerable time before the departure of Syllæus and Antipater for Rome, in June, J. P. 4709, seems pretty clearly deducible from the very statements of Josephus himself. Josephus, when speaking of what Antipater did *before* he went to Rome with Syllæus, says, “He^c remitted large sums of money to his father’s friends *at Rome*, that he might gain

^c Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 1. p. 582.

their good will, and especially to *Saturninus*, the Governor of Syria." The remark of Lardner^d upon this passage is perfectly just. "Saturninus is not here called Governor of Syria, because he was then actually in that post, for he is manifestly at Rome; but to distinguish him from others of that name, of which there were many." The truth of this observation is sufficiently borne out by the phraseology of Josephus. He speaks of Saturninus as ΤΟΝ τῆς Συρίας ἐπιμελητὴν, plainly indicating by the insertion of the definitive article^e that he meant the phrase the "Governor of Syria" to be understood rather as a titular distinction, than any mark and proof of his actual possession of that office at the time.

These remarks will, I trust, satisfy every reflecting mind that there is no necessity whatever for supposing the language of the Jewish historian to imply that Saturninus was actually President of Syria, when Antipater, in the month of June J. P. 4709, departed with Syllæus for Rome, and hence it appears, that, notwithstanding this objection, the oath of Josephus may be fairly regarded as corresponding with the taxing at our Saviour's birth, both in point of circumstances and

^d Credib. b. ii. cap. 3. p. 219.

^e See cap. vi. sect. 1. of this Enquiry.

time. By a comparison they have been proved to possess very marked and peculiar characters of resemblance,—by a separate examination they have both been traced to the spring of J. P. 4709, as the most probable period of their occurrence. This is as nearly a demonstration of their identity as can be; and the passages in which they are recorded may henceforth be very fairly considered as reflecting mutual light and confirmation upon each other. Our conclusion that Jesus, who was born during St. Luke's taxing, was born also in spring, perhaps in April J. P. 4709, follows of course. It follows also, that, as Saturninus was succeeded by Varus in the government of Syria before the 2d of September J. P. 4708, the ἀπογραφὴ at our Saviour's birth in J. P. 4709 was taken under the presidency of Varus, and not under that of Saturninus. When therefore Tertullian says "*census constat actos tunc in Judea per Sentium Saturninum,*" he must be supposed to speak literally (if he was not altogether mistaken in his assertion, which is not very improbable,) and to mean that it was taken *by* Sentius Saturninus, who might perhaps have been sent from Rome into Judea for that purpose, under an idea that the knowledge he had acquired of the affairs of that province during his government of Syria would enable him to execute such a commission better than either a perfect stranger, or

one, who like Varus had but lately entered upon his presidency, and might be already too much occupied by the transaction of the ordinary business to afford leisure for such an additional undertaking. In the future part of this Enquiry I shall therefore assume it as an established fact, and endeavour to accommodate the dates of all the other parts of our Saviour's life, his baptism, his ministry, and his crucifixion, to this, as to a common and necessary foundation.



CHAP. V.

THE PROBABLE DATE OF OUR SAVIOUR'S BAPTISM.



AFTER mentioning the Baptism of our Saviour in the 21st and 22d verses of the third chapter, St. Luke in the 23d verse has added the following remark, Καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὥσεί ἐτῶν τριάκοντα ἀρχόμενος. “And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age.”

It was the custom with computists of former ages to make this remark the foundation of their theories relative to the period of our Saviour's *birth*, and it is to this inauspicious beginning that we may in a great measure attribute the universal failure of their attempts to solve the difficulties with which the subject is surrounded. Their argument ran thus: John the Baptist entered upon the discharge of his office in the 15th year of Tiberius. Amidst the multitudes who flocked to his baptism Jesus also arrived, being about thirty years of age. Therefore Jesus was about thirty

years of age in the 15th year of Tiberius. This conclusion labours under several disadvantages. First, it takes for granted that, as John began to baptize, Jesus also was himself baptized in the 15th year of Tiberius, an inference which, though very reasonable, is not absolutely certain without other and better proof. 2d, It takes for granted that St. Luke reckoned the years of Tiberius from the death of Augustus, a mode of reckoning which is not altogether necessary or sure. 3d, As the expression of St. Luke is *ὥσεί ἐτῶν τριάκοντα*, “*about thirty years of age*,” and has been decided by so good a judge of the Greek language as Justin Martyr to be somewhat indeterminate, and to imply not exactly thirty years, but thirty years more or less,—*τριάκοντα ἔτη ἢ πλείονα ἢ καὶ ἐλάσσονα*;^a each writer has taken the full liberty which this ambiguity allows, and decided that Jesus was from twenty-five to thirty-five years of age, according as it best suited his own preconceived opinion. On all these accounts it is no wonder that the theories of Chronologers should have been in such a fluctuating state, and never during the course

^a Almost all the Fathers subsequent to Justin Martyr have deserted the moderation which he has observed, and asserted that the phrase *ὥσεί ἐτῶν τριάκοντα* means that Jesus was *less* than thirty years of age when baptized. They were led to this conclusion by their other erroneous opinion, that our Lord was only thirty when crucified, and consequently less than thirty when baptized.

of so many ages have made any nearer approach to unanimity and truth. Decker, if we may trust the intimations of Petavius,^b was the first who endeavoured to make the period of Herod's death, as deducible from the history of Josephus, subservient to the purpose of ascertaining the chronology of our Saviour's life; and since that time I think we may safely say that the writings of every succeeding computist have made a nearer approximation to that degree of accuracy which is all that need be desired or is practicable. The quotation which stands at the head of this chapter is now therefore justly considered only as a *subordinate* instrument in the settlement of the dispute; a sort of reflective argument by which a date for the birth of Christ, already rendered highly probable, may be confirmed, and the time of his baptism be more easily settled, when viewed in connexion with that date. In this manner I regard it on the present occasion, and shall agitate the question of its meaning, not as one of paramount and essential importance to the establishment of what has been already advanced, but as one to be regulated in some measure by our previous conclusions, and to be made to bend a little if necessary to meet them.

^b Animadv. in. Epiph. Hær. 51. p. 119.

In the prosecution of such an argument moderation is requisite in proportion to the licence which may be assumed. The phrase is indefinite—that is granted; and a determined theorist might almost prove a most erroneous system by a skilful adaptation of its ambiguity to his own purposes. For this very reason a partisan of *any* system should guard against the self-deception originating in his own wishes, and carefully examine the most natural and reasonable interpretation of the words, as they stand; for though a vague expression may be in fact capable of bearing several explanations, there will always be some more reasonable than others, and generally one most so. He should also see whether his interpretation and conclusions be consistent with all the other dates and circumstances with which the subject is connected. To these rules I shall adhere. If the date for the baptism of Jesus, to which we are directed by the most appropriate meaning of St. Luke's words and the evidence of external considerations, be found to correspond with the date already assigned to his birth, it will not only verify that date, but be itself confirmed, and establish a new epoch in our Saviour's life, the epoch of his *baptism*.

1. Ἦν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὥσπερ ἐτῶν τριάκοντα ἀρχόμενος.—Why the Evangelist should use the word τριάκοντα, if Jesus was at the time of

which he speaks either less than twenty-nine or more than thirty-one years of age, I cannot conceive. The only reason he could have for making any allusion at all to his age, (which is somewhat incidentally introduced,) must have been to give his reader information. Why then, if he knew him to be twenty-eight or thirty-one years of age, should he choose to mislead the reader by using the word *thirty*, when he might with equal ease have said that he was either about twenty-nine or thirty-one years of age, as the case might require? The first idea, therefore, which crosses the mind upon perusing the passage, is, that Jesus, at the time of his baptism, had lived not less than twenty-nine, and not more than thirty-one years. Consequently, every scheme of gospel chronology, which deviates from these limits, is not perhaps necessarily false, but certainly is less probable than another, in which they are not transgressed. In drawing this inference I presume of course that St. Luke was acquainted with the precise period of our Saviour's birth; if he was not exactly informed upon that point, it only renders the phrase a little more indefinite, and makes it more necessary for us, in determining the date of his baptism, to be guided by other and independent considerations.

2. Having advanced thus far, any farther

approximation to accuracy must be deduced from the nature and meaning of the construction of the passage. Now this construction has been conceived to depend upon the preposition ἀπὸ understood :—Ἦν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀρχόμενος^c εἶναι ὥσπερ ΑΠΟ ἑτῶν τριάκοντα. If this be allowed, it can scarce be said to mean any thing else than that Jesus was beginning to be from, or above, or *more* than thirty years of age; and in this sense the preposition is frequently used with reference to time. Ἀπὸ δείπνου means *a cænâ vel post cænâ*; and still more analogously, ἀπὸ παιδῶν implies *a pueritiâ vel post ætatem pueritiæ*.^d Therefore the verse at present under our consideration, if an instance of a similar construction, signifies not being under, but above thirty years.^e Now 4709 +

^c Many commentators would separate ἀρχόμενος from any connection with ἑτῶν τριάκοντα, and translate the passage, thus: "Jesus was about 30 years of age when he began his ministry." "Placet," says Petavius, "verbum ἄρχεσθαι ad initium prædicationis, οἰκονομίας, vel τῆς ἐπιφανείας referre," and he is followed by Lamy and Lardner. I prefer the authority of Epiphanius, who has removed all doubt as to the manner in which he understood the passage. Ἦν δὲ Ἰησοῦς, says he, Hær. 30, 29,—ἀρχόμενος εἶναι ὡς ἑτῶν τριάκοντα, ὡν υἱὸς, ὡς ἐνομιζέτο, Ἰωσήφ.

^d Viger. p. 580.

^e There is an argument very commonly insisted upon by writers to prove that our Saviour at his baptism was *more* than thirty years of age, which I have entirely omitted in the text. It is deduced from the supposed sacerdotal age amongst the Jews.

The

30 = 4739, consequently Jesus being born in April J. P. 4709, and baptized when above thirty and less than thirty-one years of age,—we must date his baptism between the month of April J. P. 4739 and the month of April J. P. 4740.

3. It may be inferred from the Gospels and the character and conduct of Jesus, that he strictly observed the ordinances of the Mosaic law, and generally attended the various feasts of the pass-over, the pentecost, and tabernacles. From St. John^f it is pretty evident that he was at Jerusalem

The Levites, it is said, did not enter upon the discharge of their office before the completion of their 30th year, and Numbers, ch. iv. is referred to as a proof of the assertion. But really the passage appears to me to be quite irrelevant. 1. It does not refer to the priestly office at all, nor to the Levites in general, but only to a particular family,—the sons of Kohath. 2. The office of the Kohathites was to bear the ark—and the holy things,—the curtains,—the covering,—and all the instruments of their service. Numb. iv. ver. 15, 19, 25, 26. And this office they were appointed to discharge “from thirty years old and upward, until fifty years old.” ver. 23. Most probably, because the burden might be too laborious for those under thirty or above fifty years of age. What possible argument can be deduced from this humane regulation with regard to the period at which our Saviour entered upon his spiritual ministry I cannot perceive. If it was the custom amongst the Jews that no one should assume the office of a teacher before the age of thirty, that is another question, and I do not think our Lord would needlessly violate such a custom. But I do not think it has any foundation in the preceding passage of Scripture.

^f Chap. ii.

at the first passover subsequent to his baptism, and manifested himself and his office to the Jews by the authoritative and prophetic act of cleansing the temple from the pollutions of those buyers and sellers, by whose iniquitous traffic it was perverted from its legitimate end as the house of God and prayer. If then we can find out by probable calculations what period of time elapsed between the baptism of Jesus and his first passover, these calculations will satisfactorily establish the season of the year at which he was baptized; and that year having already been determined to be J. P. 4739, that will be sufficient for every purpose.

“It came to pass,” observes St. Mark, “that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. . . . And *immediately* the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness, and he was there in the wilderness *forty* days tempted of Satan.”^g Some time after his temptation (but how long is not stated,) and the *very day after* the Jews had sent a message unto John, requesting to know whether he was or was not the Messiah,^h “John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh

^g Chap. i. ver. 9, 12, 13.

^h John, chap. i. ver. 29, &c.

away the sins of the world." And the *next day* after "John stood and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God." "The *day following* Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me." After this Philip findeth Nathanael and bringeth him to Jesus, and Jesus entered into a conversation with him, which produced his immediate conversion, and ranked him amongst the number of his disciples. Whether this took place after the return of Jesus into Galilee is not stated. If it took place before, only forty-three days complete are accounted for between the baptism of Jesus, and the first pass-over in his ministry.

"And the *third day* there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage."ⁱ It is difficult to say whether this was the third day after the conversation with Nathanael, or the third after the return of Jesus into Galilee, or the third day from the commencement of the marriage feast, which usually lasted for seven days. Lamy^k contends very strongly and plausibly for the latter mode of interpretation.

ⁱ John ii. ver. 1, 2, &c.

^k Comment. in Harm. lib. ii. cap. 10.

If we adopt his opinion, the passage will of course be of no use to us in a chronological point of view. If we follow either of the former explanations, it will give us nearly fifty days from the baptism of Jesus to the "first miracle which he wrought in Cana of Galilee." After this, and probably not long after this first miracle, "he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples; and they continued there *not many days*. And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." There is only one other place in the whole New Testament in which we meet with the phrase of "not many days," and that is in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where it undoubtedly implies a period of *ten* days. We may also suppose that our Saviour went up to Jerusalem a few days before the Paschal feast, for we know that he did so at the passover of his crucifixion: if therefore we add fourteen or sixteen days to the preceding fifty, we shall have distinctly and incontestably proved that Jesus was baptized more than two months before the first passover in his ministry. In other words, having before shewn that Jesus was baptized between the spring J. P. 4739, and the spring J. P. 4740, it is evident that the passover J. P. 4740, was the first of his ministry; consequently Jesus was baptized more than two months before the passover, that is, *he*

was baptized before the month of February, J. P. 4740 : how much before it, is our next enquiry.

In the preceding calculations the reader will observe that there are several periods of the duration of which we are ignorant or doubtful, and upon which, therefore, it is impossible to speak with any certainty or precision. 1. There is an unknown interval between the end of our Saviour's temptation and the day on which he was pointed out by the Baptist to his disciples as the Lamb of God. 2. There is an unknown interval between the call of Philip and his finding Nathanael and bringing him unto Jesus. 3. There is a doubtful interval between the conversation with Nathanael and the marriage in Cana of Galilee. 4. There is an unknown interval between the marriage in Cana of Galilee and the return of Jesus and his brethren to Capernaum. 5. The expression of "not many days" is too loose and ambiguous in itself, and occurs too seldom in the New Testament to furnish the possibility of our determining with any degree of accuracy the period which it was intended to signify. This indeed we may affirm without hesitation, that not less than sixty or seventy days elapsed between our Saviour's baptism and the passover in J. P. 4740 ; but we are quite unable to decide upon the additional number of days, or weeks, or months, which the omitted

periods might occupy. To obtain any satisfaction upon this subject we must apply, as in the question of the nativity, to tradition and the Fathers, an application which will here be attended with little difficulty.

In considering the various traditions relative to our Saviour's *birth*, we observed, that those existing amongst the Egyptians were from several causes entitled to more credit than those amongst any other body of Christians. It fortunately happens that their opinion upon the period of our Saviour's baptism has been preserved by Epiphanius, and fixes it to the month of November. Βαπτισθέντος αὐτοῦ κατ' Ἀιγυπτίους, ὡς ἔφημεν, Ἀθὺρ δωδεκάτῃ προὶ ἐξ Ἑιδῶν Νοεμβρίων.¹ Now this date is not only uncontradicted by any other tradition of equal authority and importance,^m but has also a positive recommendation in its favor, which cannot be more clearly stated than in the words of Lamy, by whom the remark, which is equally solid and ingenious, was originally made. After urging with considerable force the improbability of John's baptizing in the middle of winter, as a powerful

¹ Hær. 51, 16.

^m It would be difficult to point out the origin of the vulgar opinion which fixes the baptism of our Saviour to the 6th of January. That day was celebrated by some in commemoration of the nativity, as well as baptism of our Lord.

objection to the baptism of our Saviour in the month of January, and shewing that there is no objection whatever to the Egyptian tradition and the month of November, he proceeds to give additional strength to his conclusion in the following terms:—"Dum hæc scribo mentem subit argumentum non contemnendum, quo probari potest, Jesum baptizatum ante mensem Januarium. Eo tempore, quo quadraginta dierum jejunium Dominus complevit, quod inchoaverat statim post baptismum, tunc hibernum tempus, quo scilicet terra nullum cibum ministrat his qui in deserto vivunt, fuisse ex eo conjicio, quòd tunc esurierit Dominus; et hæc occasione usus Dæmon non illi obtulerit cibos, sed lapides in panem mutandos; et ubi discessit Dæmon, accesserint Angeli ministraturi cibum, qui nempe non parabilis erat eo tempore et eo in loco. Si Christus baptizatus fuisset sextâ die Januarii, post expletos quadraginta dies jejunii, jam proximum fuisset vernum tempus, in quo præsertim in Judæâ tellus sese aperit; ut Diabolus non suasisset Domino, quem videbat omni alimento egentem, vertere in panem lapides. Olera occurrent in fine Februarii, quibus solis primi homines ferè vescebantur. Verùm si baptizatus est Dominus in mense Novembri, expleti sunt quadraginta dies jejunii mense Decembri jam multùm promotò, quo tempore sævior est

hiems, et omni re quæ manducari possit tellus exuitur.”ⁿ

I would therefore strongly incline to the month of November, J. P. 4739, as the most probable date of our Saviour’s baptism, because in the first place it accurately corresponds with St. Luke’s designation of his age at the time, because in the second place it is favoured by an ancient and approved tradition of the Church, and lastly because it gives an easy solution to a circumstance which all the Evangelists have noticed in their accounts of the forty days’ temptation in the wilderness.

ⁿ Appar. Chron. Part II. cap. vii. sect. 1. p. 204.

CHAP. VI.

DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING THE PROBABLE DATE OF
OUR SAVIOUR'S BAPTISM.

St. Luke computed the 15th Year of the Government of Tiberius from the Date of his Proconsular Empire.

IF Jesus was baptized by John *in* the month of November J. P. 4739, the word of the Lord, which directed John to take upon himself the office of baptizing, must have come to him *before* the month of November J. P. 4739.

If Tiberius succeeded to the empire on the death of Augustus, that is, on the 19th of August J. P. 4727, the fifteenth year of his reign did not commence until the 19th of August J. P. 4741.

Therefore, according to this computation, the word of the Lord, which came to John before

November J. P. 4739, came to him nearly two years before the commencement of the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius on the 19th of August J. P. 4741.

But St. Luke expressly and unequivocally declares that the word of the Lord came to John *in* the fifteenth year of Tiberius: “Now *in* the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar . . . the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”^a Consequently either the Evangelist or our calculation with regard to the baptism of Jesus is incorrect.

The only possible way of obviating this difficulty and reconciling our opinion to the statement of St. Luke is, by supposing him to have computed the years of Tiberius from some other and earlier period than the death of Augustus. To establish the propriety of this supposition, and become entitled to avail ourselves of the means it affords of meeting the objection, we must endeavour to prove the three following propositions:

1. The *existence* of some other and earlier commencement of the reign of Tiberius.

2. The *date* of that earlier commencement of his reign.

^a Chap. iii, ver. 1, 2.

3. The probability of St. Luke's computing from that date.

If each of these points can be fairly made out and be found to agree with the date we have assigned for our Saviour's baptism, I apprehend there will not only remain no serious objection to that date, but it will be allowed by all to be confirmed, as far as the nature of circumstances will permit, by its strict correspondence with the statement of the Evangelist. But before I proceed to the consideration of these questions it will be but right to remark that the subject has already been so copiously treated by Pagi and Lardner, that my only task and labour will be to give to their arguments and illustrations a more formal arrangement, to point out with more precision the inferences to which they lead, and perhaps to supply and correct one or two omissions and errors which have escaped from their pen.

1. The existence of a commencement of the Imperial power of Tiberius, earlier than the death of Augustus, may be proved by the strongest evidence of which any historical fact is capable. It may be proved both by example and by testimony.—Titus was admitted to a participation in the empire during the life-time of Vespasian, and in consequence of that participation is addressed

by the title of "Imperator" in the dedication of the Natural History of Pliny, and equally with Vespasian called *αὐτοκράτωρ* by Josephus.^b The same honors and the same titles were conferred upon Trajan by Narva, and have been distinctly related by the younger Pliny.^c These are the examples by which the circumstance is rendered probable. The testimonies by which it is made certain are equally clear and irresistible. Suetonius^d observes that "there was a law made that Tiberius should govern the provinces *jointly* with Augustus, and make the census with him." Paterculus^e says that "at the desire of Augustus a law was passed by the Senate and people of Rome, that Tiberius might have *equal power* with him in all the provinces and armies."^f Tacitus informs us that "Tiberius was made *colleague in the empire* (with Augustus,) taken into partnership with him in the tribunician power, and recommended to all the armies;" and Dio,^g after stating the same partition of the tribunician power, remarks, that the title of *αὐτοκράτωρ*, or *emperor*, had been decreed to Tiberius amongst the rest, but that he declined assuming or making use of it. From these quotations it is undeniable that, during the life and reign of Augustus, Tiberius was ad-

^b De Bello Jud. cap. 7.

^c Paneg. cap. 8.

^d Tib. cap. 20.

^e Lib. ii, cap. 121.

^f Ann. lib. i. cap. 3.

^g Lib. lvii, p. 802.

mitted to a participation in the supreme power, -- possessed equal authority in the provinces and armies and the tribunician power at Rome, and was on those accounts styled his colleague in the empire, and might, if he had chosen, have adopted the same title and dignity.

2. There is somewhat more difficulty in settling the precise year of the commencement of this joint or subordinate reign of Tiberius; and the difficulty arises from a supposed contradiction between the statements of Suetonius and Paterculus, in consequence of which it has been doubted by learned men, whether Tiberius became colleague in the empire two or three years before the death of Augustus. I consider this contradiction to be entirely imaginary, and shall endeavour to shew, by a careful comparison of the passages in which it is conceived to exist, that both the historians are in strict harmony with each other, when the words which they have used are properly pointed and understood.

Paterculus unquestionably asserts that the law, which constituted Tiberius the colleague of Augustus in the empire, was passed *before* his return from Germany and the triumph to which he was entitled for his successful exertions. His words are so plain that they cannot admit of a doubt.

“Concussis hostium viribus classicis peditumque expeditionibus, cum res Galliarum maximæ molis accensæque plebis Viennensium dissensiones coercitione magis quam pœnâ mollisset, et senatus populusque Rom. (postulante patre ejus) *ut æquum ei jus in omnibus provincias exercitibusque esset, quam erat ipsi*, decreto complexus esset. (Tiberius) in urbem reversus, ex Pannoniis Dalmatisque egit triumphum.”^h Such is the testimony of Paterculus. On the other hand it has been supposed that the date, which Suetonius has assigned for this law decreeing equal power to Tiberius, assigns it to a period *subsequent* to his triumph, and consequently that he differs from Paterculus. Did this or any difference really exist between them, I should have no hesitation whatever in giving an immediate and positive decision in favour of Paterculus, who was not only the contemporary historian, but the companion of Tiberius, and one who bore a principal share in the transactions he records. According to every rule of just criticism then, he is a credible and satisfactory witness. In all human probability he could not be ignorant of the facts which he narrates, and to his statements it should be our first endeavour to reconcile the words of every other writer: but in fact I conceive, that upon a fair examina-

^h Lib. ii. cap. 121.

tion it will appear that there is not any kind of disagreement whatever. The words of Suetoniusⁱ are these:—"A Germaniâ in urbem post biennium regressus, triumphum quem distulerat egit. . . . Ac non multo post, —lege per Coss. latâ ut provincias cum Augusto communiter administraret simulque censum ageret,—condito lustrò in Illyricum profectus est." Now, the only way in which this can be construed to imply a contradiction to Paterculus is by omitting (as Lardner has done) the comma after "post," and so referring the words "ac non multo post" to "lege latâ," &c. a reference which is, I apprehend, directly contrary to the intentions of the author. His object was, I think, to unite "non multo post" exclusively to "condito lustrò," and to place "lege per Coss. latâ, &c.—censum ageret" in a parenthesis; for if that had not been his intention, he ought not, and would not, as I conceive, have written "condito lustrò," but "condito*que* lustrò." The sense therefore is not, that a law was not long after his triumph passed to make him a colleague in the empire and in the taking of the census, but that a law having been passed to that effect, he not long after his triumph took the census and departed for Illyricum. "Ac non multo post (lege latâ ut provincias cum Augusto communiter admi-

ⁱ Tiber. cap. 20.

nistraret simulque censum ageret) condito Iustro in Illyricum profectus est.” “And, a law having been passed that he should govern the provinces jointly with Augustus, and together with him take a census, he not long after departed for Illyricum. the census being completed.” That the words are capable of this sense is indubitable,—that, this sense being admitted, the imaginary difficulty is perfectly removed is equally clear; for the passage, thus interpreted, determines nothing further than the simple fact of such a law having been passed, without deciding any thing as to the time; and that we ought to adopt this sense no one can for a moment hesitate to grant who considers the preceding observations which we have made upon the superior authority of Paterculus, whose statement, without this explanation, the words would decidedly contradict. It is indeed astonishing that men of learning, and candour, and judgment, as Pagi and Lardner, and others, who have employed so much labour and ingenuity in the useful task of reconciling the apparent contrarities of the Evangelists, should, immediately upon leaving the sacred writers, lose sight of that admirable rule of criticism, which declares that every difference is not a contradiction, and the moment they enter upon the consideration of profane authors or profane history, conclude that every little disagreement in different,

or even the same writer, is an error either of one or the other, or both.

Having reconciled the seeming opposition between Paternulus and Suetonius, we are now in a condition to calculate the period at which we ought to fix the commencement of the Proconsular empire of Tiberius. Suetonius informs us that Tiberius returned from Germany, and enjoyed his triumph after a two year's absence from Rome. It was during his absence that the law was passed which made him equal with Augustus in the provinces; consequently his proconsular empire must be dated sometime within two years before his return and triumph. Our attention must therefore be directed to find out, in the first place, the period at which Tiberius was sent into Germany. The period of his triumph will then be ascertained, and the extreme limits, within which the date of his proconsular empire lies, will follow as a matter of course. Now Pagi^k has demonstrated, beyond all contradiction, that the loss of Varus and his legions took place, J. P. 4722. In the *following* year, that is, J. P. 4723, Dio^l informs us that Tiberius dedicated the temple of Concord; and Suetonius^m that he was sent into Germany. Now Ovidⁿ states that

^k Critic. in Bar. A. cap. x. p. 6.

^l Lib. 56.

^m Tiber. cap. xviii.

ⁿ Fasti, lib. i. v. 637.

the dedication of the temple of Concord took place on the 16th of January. It must therefore have been *after* the said 16th of January J. P. 4723 that Tiberius went into Germany. He most probably left Rome *immediately* after, in order to reach the armies before the usual time of opening their military campaigns in spring. In Germany, as we have already been told by Suetonius, he remained about two years, and then returned to Rome to enjoy his triumph. Spring J. P. 4723 + 2 = Spring, J. P. 4725; consequently Tiberius returned to Rome at the latest in the spring of J. P. 4725; and between that period and the spring of J. P. 4723 is the commencement of his proconsular empire to be dated.

The same date may be deduced from another mode of calculation, upon which Pagi and Lardner have spoken at much length. The former they have merely touched upon, being checked in their progress by the difference which they supposed to exist between Suetonius and Paterculus.

Lucius Piso, it appears from Tacitus,^o died in J. P. 4745, after having been præfect of Rome for twenty years, “viginti per annos.” J. P. 4745 - 20 = J. P. 4725; therefore Piso was ap-

^o Ann. lib. vi. cap. 2.

pointed præfect of Rome sometime in J. P. 4725 : but it appears from Pliny^p and Suetonius^q that Piso was selected for the office of præfect by Tiberius *after* he became prince, and *during* the correction of the public morals. Now he became, as we have before seen, the colleague of Augustus in the empire, and was appointed to take the census by a decree of the Senate, which is to be dated *before* his return to Rome. He returned to Rome in the early part of J. P. 4725, and after celebrating his triumph, would of course proceed to the business of the census, to which he had been already nominated by a law, and which was not finished, according to the Ancyran Marble, until J. P. 4727. If therefore the word “Prince,” which is used by Pliny, be equivalent to the phrase “colleague in the empire;” and the “correction of public manners,” which is spoken of by Suetonius, be the same as the act of taking the census, it is plain that Piso, having been appointed præfect according to Tacitus in J. P. 4725, *was* appointed after Tiberius became Prince, and during the correction of the public morals. That the census and the correction of the public morals are the same may be argued from the known fact, that a census involved, as a necessary part of its business, the censure of the manners of the Roman people, and

^p Nat. Hist. lib. xiv. cap. 22.

^q Tiber. cap. 42.

from the express words of Dio,¹ who asserts the same thing :—'Εκ δὲ τοῦ τιμητεῦν, τοὺς τε βίους καὶ τοὺς τρόπους ἡμῶν ἐξετάζουσι, καὶ ἀπογραφὰς ποιοῦνται,—and that the word "Prince" is equivalent in this case at least to the title of "colleague in the empire," and refers to that equal and proconsular authority which was allotted to Tiberius, is evident from two considerations. First, there is no other known circumstance in the life of Tiberius which could have given rise to the name. Secondly, it has been already observed that Titus and Vespasian were colleagues in the empire, and by Capitolinus² they are both and without any distinction called "Principes." Avus Annius Rufus, iterum consul et præfectus urbi, adscitus in patricios a *principibus* Vespasiano et Tito censoribus." Hence I conceive we are fully justified in regarding "prince" and "colleague in the empire" when applied to Tiberius, as the same, and the "correction of public morals" to be the Roman census; and thus are enabled to confirm the date we have previously given for the proconsular empire of Tiberius, namely, that it began previous to the commencement of the year J. P. 4725. An objection has indeed been made to the very foundation of this whole argument. Cardinal Noris

¹ Lib. liii. p. 508.

² In Marc. Anton. Philos. sub initio.

objects that the only power, which Tiberius possessed in J. P. 4725, was derived either from his censorial, tribunician, or proconsular authority. But his proconsular authority was confined to the armies and provinces, his tribunician simply to the right of intercession, and his censorial to the peculiar business of the census ; consequently, in the year J. P. 4725, Tiberius was not in possession of any office in virtue of which he could have appointed a præfect of Rome. From this and other circumstances, he seems to think that he ought to adopt the conjecture of Lipsius, and read *ten* instead of *twenty* years in that passage of Tacitus in which he speaks of the duration of Piso's præfecture, thus fixing his appointment by Tiberius to that office in the year J. P. 4735, and not J. P. 4725. But in answer to this it has been remarked that the proposed alteration in the text of Tacitus is totally without foundation, and contrary to every manuscript ; and as to the incapacity of Tiberius to appoint a præfect of the city, I think it is quite sufficient to observe that Suetonius is a much better judge of what Tiberius did, and was able to do, than Cardinal Noris, and that, as the method of making such appointments was a matter of *private* arrangement between the two colleagues, it is impossible for any one to say what powers were or were not entrusted to Tiberius by Augustus. From his *public* situations and offices

he might not be entitled to appoint or remove a præfect of the city, but by a *private* understanding with Augustus he might have the power of *selection*^t or nomination to this and many other dignities absolutely entrusted to his care. Since then it appears from Tacitus, that Piso was made præfect of Rome J. P. 4725, and from Suetonius, that he was appointed by Tiberius, whilst he was taking the census and after he had received the proconsular power, it follows that the commencement of that power must be dated *before* the commencement of J. P. 4725, as we have before determined.

Our next step towards accuracy must be drawn from the statements of Paterculus. He, as well as the other historians, informs us, that after the destruction of Varus, that is, as we have before proved, in the spring J. P. 4723, Tiberius was sent into Germany, confirmed the allegiance of the Gauls, vanquished his enemies, and being successful in every undertaking put his troops into *winter* quarters,—*Mittitur ad Germaniam, Gallias confirmat ——— ultra Rhenum transgreditur ———*

^t Pliny does not say that Piso was appointed, but only *selected* for the office by Tiberius,—“*Credidere L. Pisonem urbis Romæ curæ ab eo delectum quod biduo duabusque noctibus perpotationem continuasset apud ipsum jam principem.* Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xiv. cap. 22.

fundit obvios, maximâque cum gloriâ in *hyberna* revertitur.”^u This brings us to Nov. J. P. 4723. He then proceeds in the very next chapter to say that the same good conduct and good fortune attended Tiberius in the following season or year:—“Eadem et virtus et fortuna *subsequenti tempore*^x ingressa animam imperatoris Tiberii fuit, quæ initio fuerat.” This I consider as alluding to the transactions of the *second* year’s campaign in Germany, that is, J. P. 4724. Having stated this, Paterculus adds in the same chapter and even sentence, that, *when* Tiberius had completely accomplished the object for which he was sent and settled the affairs of Gaul, and Augustus had requested and the Senate agreed to confer upon him, as some reward for his services, a power and authority in the armies and provinces equal to those which were possessed by Augustus himself, he returned to Rome. “*Cum* res Galliarum maximæ molis accensæque plebis Viennensium dissensiones mollisset, et senatus populusque Romanus (postulante patre ejus) ut æquum ei jus in

^u Lib. ii. cap. 120.

^x “*Subsequenti tempore*” in the following *year*. The word *tempus* is most unequivocally used in the same sense as “*annus*” in the subjoined quotation from the Commentaries of Cæsar, lib. 5, c. 7. where, speaking of the West wind, he says,—“*Magnam partem omnis temporis in his locis fluere consuevit.*” It usually blows in these places a great part of every year.

omnibus provinciis exercitibusque esset, quàm erat ipsi, decreto complexus esset—in urbem reversus est.”^y The law follows immediately after the relation of his success, and his return is placed after both. This law, therefore, must have been passed about the conclusion of the second year’s campaign in Germany, that is, about the conclusion of the year J. P. 4724.

3. To the probability of St. Luke’s computing the years of Tiberius from the date of his proconsular government two very serious objections have been made, and as this is, after all, the most important point to be determined, I will state them fully and fairly :

It has been objected, in the first place, that Tiberius has not been called *Emperor* by any Latin historian, and that not one of the Latin historians has given the slightest hint of any other commencement of his reign than that which is dated from the death of Augustus on the 19th of August J. P. 4727.

To this I answer that it is perfectly true, but not quite unaccountable, therefore not quite decisive against the probability of such a compu-

^y Lib. ii. cap. 121.

tation having been adopted by St. Luke. That the Roman historians have never called Tiberius "Imperator," though Pliny, and Josephus, and Philostratus have, each in his turn, bestowed that title of supremacy upon Titus before the death of Vespasian, is a singularity which may be traced to the different degrees or rather extent of power possessed respectively by Tiberius and Titus, when colleagues in the empire. Of Titus, Philostratus² affirms that he was Ἀναρρήθεις ἀυτοκράτωρ ἐν τῇ ΡΩΜΗ ἰσομοιρήσων τῆς ἀρχῆς τῷ πατρί,—“declared Emperor in *Rome*, and having an equal share in the government with his father,” without confining that equality of power to any particular part of the empire. Of Tiberius it is only said that he was admitted to an equal degree of authority “in the *provinces* and armies.” Not one of the passages which have been quoted in the course of this discussion carries his participation in the imperial power to the city or territory of Rome. All the authority he possessed there was in right of the tribunician power which he had long held, or from the concessions of Augustus in whose name, of course, he must have acted both in Rome and the Roman states. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Roman historians, who of course were accustomed to that computation only which was

² Vit. Apollon. lib. vi. cap. 30. quoted by Lardner.

acknowledged in Rome, should never have calculated the years of his reign from any other epoch than the death of Augustus. And this limitation of the imperial power of Tiberius, when the colleague only of Augustus, would naturally induce them to withhold from him the title of Emperor, as well as prevent their reckoning the years of his reign from his participation in a joint and subordinate empire. The same remark will apply to Josephus, who was so conversant with the Romans, and more especially with the affairs of Titus, whom he has styled *αὐτοκράτωρ* at a time when we know that he was only Vespasian's colleague. But the same remark does *not* apply to St. Luke, who was a *provincial* writer, an inhabitant of one of those provinces in which the authority of Tiberius was *equal* to that of Augustus, from the very moment in which the decree of the Senate constituted him his colleague. St. Luke, therefore, *might*, though Josephus and the Roman historians have not computed the years of Tiberius from the commencement of his proconsular empire.

2. But it is further objected, that the computation of the years of Tiberius from the commencement of his proconsular empire was as much unknown in the provinces as in Rome,—that it was in fact not admitted in the city of Antioch, which has usually been considered as the

birth-place and residence of St. Luke himself,—and that it may be reasonably supposed that St. Luke would follow the computation in use at Antioch.

This is a strong fact, and is undeniable. There are most certainly two Antiochian medals, the obverses of which bear the head of Tiberius, and the reverses of which are respectively marked with the first and third years of his reign, and the forty-fifth and forty-seventh years of the era of the Antiochians, which began on the 2d of Sept. J. P. 4683, the day of the battle of Actium. Now $4683 + 44 = 4727$ and $4683 + 46 = 4729$; consequently it is absolutely certain from these medals that the first and third years of Tiberius are to be dated as commencing respectively in the 4727th and 4729th years of the Julian Period, that is, they are to be considered as the first and third years of his reign from the death of Augustus, who died on the 19th of August J. P. 4727, and not from the proconsular empire of Tiberius.

It is easy to perceive how formidable this objection is, both in appearance and reality; and I can scarcely think it an ingenuous proceeding on the part of Pagi and Lardner, that they should have passed it over in silence, as if unimportant. Neither of them could be ignorant of its existence.

Pagi^a has made, upon another occasion, a most excellent use of these very medals, and argued for the commencement of the Antiochian era from the day of the battle of Actium, expressly upon the ground of their containing the dates of the first and third years of the *sole* empire of Tiberius. Lardner, also, it is plain, had read Lamy, and Lamy^b has insisted upon these medals as an invincible proof of the improbability of St. Luke's computing from the *proconsular* empire of Tiberius. It is not, however, by omitting difficulties that the cause of truth or the gospel is to be promoted. We must meet the objection fairly; and in doing so, I will confess that, but for the following reasons, I should regard it as unanswerable.

It is evident that these medals do not necessarily contain the opinion of the Antiochian *people*, but only of the Antiochian *mint*. Now Lardner^c observes, that "Tiberius seems to have taken pains to obliterate the date of his *proconsular* government, inasmuch as he was unwilling to have it thought that he owed his greatness to the adoption of Augustus, or the intrigues of his mother

^a Critic. p. xiv. A. D. 14. In his App. Chron. p. 37, he quotes a similar medal of the Seleucians.

^b App. Chron. Part II. cap. 1. J. P. 4727. p. 106.

^c Credib. b. ii. cap. 3. p. 264.

Livia, but would have it ascribed solely to the free choice of the people after Augustus's death." And in proof of this he refers to passages in Tacitus^d and in Dio.^e If this was really the case, it sufficiently accounts for the Antiochian mint, to which the instructions or even wishes of the Emperor would be a law, not having made use of the date of the proconsular empire of Tiberius. With regard to other Emperors, they certainly did sometimes date from other periods than the commencement of their sole empire. "Pagi mentions a medal which has this inscription,—*In the 11th new sacred year of the Emperor Titus Cæsar Vespasian Augustus.* Now Titus reigned alone after his father's death but a little above two years."^f It is also certain that this new sacred era is not to be computed from any one common period, as the building or dedication of a temple, because the numbers answer exactly to the years of the Emperors Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, and Nerva, upon whose coins alone it is to be found. Is it then an impossible supposition that the mint of Antioch may in this instance have had particular directions upon the subject, or that St. Luke, a writer, careless or perhaps ignorant of the wishes of the emperor, and unconnected with the affairs

^d Ann. lib. i. cap. 8.

^e Lib. 57. p. 603.

^f Lardner, Credib. book ii. cap. 3. p. 261.

of state, should have followed some other mode, and dated from the commencement of some other period than the death of Augustus. Had St. Luke indeed declared positively that it was in the 15th year of the *sole* empire of Tiberius that the word of God came unto John, or had he used the word *reign* or *empire* at all, I should not have ventured to defend the position which I am now advocating. But the word of the Evangelist, though translated *reign* in the authorized English version, does not imply a sole, or supreme, or independent sovereignty. St. Luke does not say Ἐν ἔτει πεντεκαίδεκάτῳ τῆς Βασιλείας, or τῆς ἀρχῆς, but τῆς ΗΓΕΜΟΝΙΑΣ Τιβερίου. Now, though the word ἡγεμονία itself is not to be found in any other passage of the New Testament, the cognate words ἡγεμονεύω and ἡγεμὼν are frequently to be met with, and wherever they do occur, they imply universally, and without any exception whatever, a *subordinate* and not a supreme authority. Whenever a supreme and independent magistrate is spoken of, his title is always βασιλεὺς, which has been explained to us as clearly as any word can be explained by two of the Apostles themselves.—Τω βασιλεῖ ὡς ΥΠΕΡΕΧΟΝΤΙ, says St. Peter^g—ὅτι ἐβασίλευσε Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ, says St. John.^h The term βασιλεὺς is also on one occasion particularly applied

^g 1 Pet. ii. 13.

^h Apoc. xix. 6.

to the Roman Emperor, οὐκ ἔχομεν βασιλέα εἰ μὴ Καίσαρα.ⁱ Lastly, there is a distinction made between ἡγεμῶν and βασιλεὺς both by St. Matthew^k and St. Mark;^l the nature of which distinction is carefully and clearly pointed out by St. Luke, the author now under our consideration. Paul was summoned to defend himself before Agrippa the King, and Festus the Governor of Judea. Agrippa was in his dominions a supreme and independent monarch. Festus held his authority under the Roman Emperor. After St. Paul had made his address, St. Luke observes that “the King and the Governor rose up,” ἀνέστη ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ ὁ ἡγεμῶν,^m thus placing between the words βασιλεὺς and ἡγεμῶν the same difference which subsists between a supreme and a subordinate power. The same distinction is, as far as I have observed, very scrupulously adhered to by Josephus. Βασιλεία or ἀρχὴ is the term he applies to an Emperor or King; ἡγεμονία and its cognates always refer to a power held under another as its supreme source, to a governor and government. From these remarks I think it is very highly probable that St. Luke did not, when speaking in the third chapter of his Gospel of the 15th year of Tiberius, intend to date from the commencement of his sole

ⁱ John xix. 15.^k Chap. x. 18.^l Chap. xiii. 9.^m Acts xxvi. 30.

and independent *empire*, but of some subordinate and dependent *government*. Had he meant his sole empire, he would have employed the word βασιλεία and not ἡγεμονία. This is still further rendered probable by a difference between the expression of St. Luke and that on the Antiochian medals. In the inscription upon those coins we read ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΥ Καίσαρος, which necessarily implies that at the time at which they were struck Tiberius had assumed or permitted the title of *Augustus* to be bestowed upon him; but before the death of Augustus he never received that title; consequently we are compelled to fix the date of these medals after the death of Augustus, and in the *sole* empire of Tiberius. But we do *not* find this word Σεβαστοῦ in the Evangelist. His words are Τιβερίου Καίσαρος alone, and though the omission of Σεβαστοῦ is not decisive, yet it is so far favourable to our views that it does not oblige us to suppose him speaking of a period subsequent to the assumption of that title by Tiberius.

Upon the whole then, though the word “reign,” which is the translation of ἡγεμονία in the authorised English version, be not absolutely incorrect, the word “government” appears to be much more proper and much more consistent with the meaning of the cognates of ἡγεμονία in every part of the New Testament; and on this account I think it

ought to be substituted and preferred. We ought to read,—“ In the fifteenth year of the *government* of Tiberius Cæsar the word of God came unto John in the wilderness ;” and with that necessary alteration it will no longer seem so incredible to suppose that St. Luke was referring to the proconsular government rather than the sole and imperial reign of Tiberius. The proconsular authority conferred upon him nothing more than a subordinate government, an *ἡγεμονία* in the strict though highest sense of the word ; but his sole empire, after the death of Augustus, was a *βασιλεία*, and could not be rightly designated by any term of inferior import. If, therefore, the Evangelist be speaking of that supreme power, he speaks somewhat carelessly, to say the least of it, when he calls it an *ἡγεμονία*.

I have now said all that I can in answer to the objections which have been urged, and I am extremely anxious (I will not disguise it) that these answers should be deemed satisfactory. It remains for me to vindicate the opinion from the charge of novelty, and to shew that, though Herwart is generally considered as the author of this method of computing the 15th year of Tiberius from the commencement of his proconsular empire, he was in fact, without being aware of the circumstance, perhaps only reviving, amongst the moderns, a

notion which had been entertained and acted upon by the majority of Christian writers from the very promulgation of the Gospel.

The Christian Fathers, from the earliest times and almost with one consent, declare, that Jesus suffered death for mankind in the 15th year of the sole empire of Tiberius, the two Gemini being consuls; and assign for the duration of his ministry, or in other words place between his baptism and his crucifixion, a period of *more* than a single year. But if the word of God came to John in the 15th year of the sole empire of Tiberius and before the baptism of Jesus, such an opinion would never have been formed or followed; for it is certain that these Fathers had before them, as we have, the Gospel of St. Luke, and that they did read in that Gospel, as we also now read, that Jesus was not baptized until after the commencement of the 15th year of the government of Tiberius. Is it not therefore probable, is it not almost demonstrable from hence, that they did *not* think that the 15th year of the *government* of Tiberius, mentioned by St. Luke, referred to his reign, as sole and supreme Emperor?—Had that been their interpretation of the Evangelist's words, they would and must have concluded that our Saviour was crucified *after* and not *in* the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius. It is plain then,

from their forming a different conclusion, that they conceived the *government* of Tiberius, according to the Evangelist, to have preceded his reign in the common acceptation of that word; but this is not only a deduction from their general opinions, it is also a fact, which, as it regards some individuals at least, is rendered undeniable by the testimony of Clemens Alexandrinus.—Some, says he," suppose that Tiberius reigned twenty-two years, but others twenty-six years, six months, and nineteen days. With the accuracy of these dates I am not at present concerned,—I merely produce them to prove that there were different modes of computing the duration, and therefore the commencement of the reign of Tiberius:—now it is absolutely certain that Tiberius did not reign twenty-six years from the death of Augustus. This date must consequently have been reckoned from some previous commencement, which is all that it is necessary to our purpose to contend for.

Taking it then for granted as probable, though not perhaps as demonstrated for certain, that the years of Tiberius in St. Luke are the years of his proconsular empire, and that this proconsular empire began about the conclusion of J. P. 4724, I shall now proceed to examine whether, according

" Strom. lib. i. p. 406.

to this opinion, the word of God came to John in the *fifteenth* year of his government, that is, between the conclusion of J. P. 4738 and J. P. 4739.

We have determined the baptism of Jesus to November J. P. 4739, as its most probable date. If, therefore, the word of the Lord did not come to John more than ten or twelve months before the baptism of Jesus, it did come to him in the 15th year of the proconsular government of Tiberius. The length of time by which this revelation to John preceded the actual baptism of our Saviour becomes therefore a necessary preliminary to the elucidation of the difficulty.

What we either know or can gather from the Gospels relative to the duration of the Baptist's ministry previous to the baptism of our Saviour is extremely scanty and dubious.

1. St. Lukeⁿ says, that "the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness; *and* he came into all the country round about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." The connecting particle "and" is quite indefinite, and is used in the

Gospels to signify various periods of greater or less duration, but from the manner in which it here connects the revelation to John with the commencement of his preaching, no unprejudiced person could possibly suppose that they did not *immediately* follow each other. I think, therefore, that no interval, or at least a very short one, elapsed between those two events.

2. John went, as we have seen above, into all the countries round about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance, and his success was such, that, according to St. Matthew^p and St. Mark^q “all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and they of Jerusalem went out unto him, and were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.” This travelling into all the country round about Jordan, and preaching there, may have occupied several months, and would not probably occupy more.

3. It was during this period, “then,” as we are informed by St. Matthew;^r “in those days,” according to St. Mark;^s and “when all the people were baptized,” or “whilst they were baptizing,”

^p Chap. iii. 5.

^q Chap. i. 5.

^r Chap. iii. 13.

^s Chap. i. 9.

as we learn from St. Luke,¹ that Jesus also came from Galilee to John, and was baptized of him in Jordan. The baptism of Jesus, therefore, occurred at an interval of several months from the period at which the word of God came to John in the wilderness of Judea.

4. *How many* months elapsed between the revelation to John and the baptism of Jesus may be gathered with some appearance of accuracy from the subject of John's preaching. He preached "the *baptism* of repentance for the remission of sins." Winter does not seem a very fit or natural time for beginning to promulgate a doctrine which exacted the baptism of all its converts, that is, according to the general practice of those days, the complete immersion of the whole body of the disciple in the open river. It would seem much more reasonable on this account to suppose that the word of God, directing John to preach and baptize, was communicated to him in the summer or spring, or in other words, about four or six months before the baptism of Jesus in November.

¹ Chap. iii. 21. Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ βαπτισθῆναι ἅπαντα τὸν λαόν. The authorised version "when all the people were baptized" seems rather inaccurate. In Luc. c. x. v. 38. ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτοὺς, is very properly translated, "It came to pass as they went," and the similar phrase above-mentioned ought in common consistency to have been rendered "whilst all the people were baptizing" or being baptized.

5. That these inferences are not incorrect,—that the ministry of John had only occupied a short space of time before the baptism of Jesus may also be argued from the Gospel of St. John. From his first chapter it appears that on a certain day the priests came to ask John who he was, and received their answer. On the very next day John again bore witness to Jesus, whom he saw walking, mentioning what had taken place at his baptism. From this account we may easily collect that this enquiry could not have been made previous to our Lord's baptism, because the Baptist speaks of that as a thing already past.^u Neither could it have taken place before the temptation of Jesus; because St. Mark asserts that his temptation began immediately after his baptism, whereas the continuity and regularity of St. John's narrative precludes its having taken place at all, if it did not take place before this mission of the Levites to the Baptist. This enquiry then must have been made more than 40 days after the Baptism of our Saviour. Having established this, we shall easily perceive that our Saviour's baptism must have happened very early in the ministry of his forerunner; for it is natural to suppose that the general expectation of the Messiah then entertained would make the Jews very anxious to

^u Ver. 32.

ascertain both who and what the Baptist was; and almost the first accounts of John's extraordinary character, and actions, and mode of life would induce them to make the necessary enquiries. Had then John been baptizing for the space of ten or twelve months before our Saviour went to him, and been all that time upon the banks of the Jordan, it is in the highest degree probable, I would almost say, certain, that a formal and official enquiry into his pretensions would have been made by the Priests and Levites at Jerusalem long before, instead of forty days after the baptism of Jesus.

Thus it appears that, if we fix the commencement of the Baptist's ministry about *six* months before the baptism of Jesus in November J. P. 4739, we place it as early, and if we place it *one* month before the baptism of Jesus in Nov. J. P. 4739, we place it as late as the circumstances which are recorded in the New Testament will permit. Nov. J. P. 4739—6 months=May J. P. 4739, which is therefore the earliest, and Nov. J. P. 4739,—one month=Oct. J. P. 4739, which is therefore the latest period at which the word of God came to John, and corresponds exactly to the 15th year of the proconsular government of Tiberius, which comprehends at least the greater part of J. P. 4739, being to be dated, as we have

shewn, from the latter end of J. P. 4724; to which if we add 15 years we shall arrive at the latter end of J. P. 4739, as the final limit.

From all that has been said it follows that, supposing St. Luke to have computed the years of Tiberius from the date of his association to the empire, the propriety and period of which computation we have laboured by various considerations to establish, —“ the word of God which came as we suppose to John the son of Zacharias in J. P. 4739, came to him in the 15th year of the government of Tiberius Cæsar.” In other words, our calculations most accurately agree with the statement of the Evangelist, as far as this circumstance is concerned.



SECTION II.

*Pontius Pilate was Governor of Judea,
J. P. 4739.*



THERE is some doubt about the fact which the title of this section asserts,—Pontius Pilate was dismissed from his government by Vitellius, and ordered to go to Rome after having passed *ten* years in Judea, and before he reached Rome the Emperor Tiberius was dead. All these circumstances, as well as the quotations which I shall introduce in the course of this investigation, may be found in the 6th chapter of the 18th book of the Antiquities of Josephus. Now from the statement, that before Pilate reached Rome the death of Tiberius had taken place, it is inferred with considerable plausibility, that Pilate had not been removed by Vitellius above two months before Tiberius died, March 16th J. P. 4750, and January J. P. 4750 – 10 years = January J. P. 4740. Therefore Pilate entered upon the government of Judea about January J. P. 4740.

If this were admitted as true, it would completely overturn both our opinion as to the time at which the word of God came to John, and also our method of computing the years of Tiberius. For St. Luke positively declares that when, in the 15th year of the government of Tiberius, the word of God came unto John, Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea. But if the word of God came to John, as we suppose, in May or October J. P. 4739, Pontius Pilate was *not* then, according to the above computation, the governor of Judea.

Lardner^a has taken this objection and difficulty into his particular consideration, and given it a very large and copious answer. It is not necessary to follow him through all his reasonings. The very chapter of Josephus upon which his answer is founded contains an irrefragable proof that Pilate *was* governor of Judea in the spring of J. P. 4739. I shall therefore pass over his lengthened arguments, which are not perhaps perfectly conclusive, and insist only upon this shorter solution of the difficulty which he has most unaccountably left unnoticed and neglected.

The Senate of Samaria sent to Vitellius præfect of Syria an accusation against Pilate for what

^a Credibility, b. ii. cap. 3, §. 3.

they deemed the murder of some of their countrymen. Vitellius, in consequence of their complaints, sent his friend Marcellus to supersede Pilate, whom he ordered to go directly to Rome, to answer before Cæsar the accusations which had been laid against him. “Thus Pilate having remained ten years in Judea, at the command of Vitellius whom he durst not disobey, returned to Rome, but Tiberius died before he got thither. Afterwards Vitellius went to Judea, and arrived at Jerusalem at the time of the celebration of the feast of the Passover.” This Passover,^b it is evident, was the first which occurred after the removal of Pilate. Was it also the first *after* the death of Tiberius? Because it is said by Josephus “that Tiberius died” before Pilate reached Rome, it is *inferred* that it was. From the subsequent tenor of the narrative of Josephus I think it may be clearly *demonstrated* that it was *not*. The tenor of the historian’s narrative to which I allude is this :

At the first Passover after Pilate’s removal, Vitellius remitted to the inhabitants of Judea the tribute of fruit,—restored to the temple the sacerdotal robes,—deposed the high priest Joseph, surnamed Caiaphas,—substituted in his room Jonathan the son of Ananus, and *then* returned to

^b Josephus, ubi supra.

Antioch.—“And now Tiberius sends letters to Vitellius commanding him to form a friendly alliance with Artabanus King of the Parthians.” This was after Vitellius’s return to Antioch; whence it is highly probable that Tiberius was then alive. But it is not absolutely certain, because these letters, though written before, might not be received by Vitellius till after the death of Tiberius,—We must therefore proceed.

In consequence of these letters from Tiberius, Artabanus and Vitellius met together at the Euphrates for the purpose of settling the conditions of the treaty.—The terms were fixed, and “not long after Artabanus, together with many presents, sent his son Darius as an hostage to Tiberius. . . . Then Vitellius returned to Antioch, and King Artabanus to Babylon.”—When Vitellius sent his dispatches to the Emperor with an account of his success in these negotiations, “Cæsar signified to him, that he was acquainted with the whole affair from Herod before.”—Vitellius was much chagrined at this circumstance, and conceived a great dislike to Herod in consequence, which however “he carefully concealed until *Caius* obtained the empire.” Tiberius, therefore, it is evident, was not only the Emperor to whom Vitellius sent his dispatches, but also that Cæsar who in his answer signified to him that he

was acquainted with the whole affair from Herod before. Tiberius therefore was living subsequently to these negotiations with Artabanus, that is, he was alive a considerable time subsequent to the first Passover after Pilate's removal.—Hence it is clearly demonstrable that the first Passover after Pilate's removal was not the first *after* the death of Tiberius, but some Passover *before* it. Consequently whatever difficulty we may experience in accounting for Pilate's not reaching home until more than a year after his removal from the government of Judea,—a difficulty, however, which the dilatory character of Tiberius, and the natural repugnance of Pilate to appear before him, render not altogether unexplicable,—we are bound to adhere to the plain testimony of facts, and not permit ourselves to be driven from the belief of a truth which may be proved by an objection which may be deduced from our ignorance of the reasons of a particular circumstance.

To proceed, we have seen that the first Passover after Pilate's removal was some Passover before the death of Tiberius. What Passover it actually was is now to be determined, and for this purpose we must go on with our quotations from Josephus.

About this time, that is, after the termination

of the affair with Artabanus and Aretas King of Arabia Petraea, an engagement took place, in which the whole army of Herod was defeated, and Herod immediately dispatched letters to Tiberius, (another proof of that Emperor being still alive,) who commanded Vitellius to make war upon Aretas ; and Vitellius in obedience to the order, having collected a considerable force, began his march towards Petra, and arrived at Ptolomais.

As it is evident from the preceding part of the historian's narrative, which we have already epitomised, that a considerable portion of the Summer which succeeded the removal of Pilate must have been employed in the negotiations with Artabanus, and it does not appear that the defeat of the Jewish troops had then taken place, we must conclude that Herod did not write to Tiberius, nor Tiberius send orders to Vitellius, until after the conclusion of the treaty with Artabanus, and the return of the præfect of Syria to Antioch.—This was probably about the latter end of the year, or at least so late as to prevent our supposing that the collection of the troops and the other necessary preparations for war could have been made in sufficient time to permit Vitellius to march towards Arabia before the following Spring.—The expedition against Aretas and the arrival of the Roman army at Ptolomais,

on its road to Petra, may therefore with most propriety be dated in the *second* Spring after the removal of Pilate.

Now Josephus informs us “that, as Vitellius was about to march his army through Judea, the chief men met him, entreating him not to go through their country ; he complied with their request, and having ordered his army to take their route through the great plain, he himself, with Herod the tetrarch and their friends, went up to Jerusalem, to worship God, a feast of the Jews being at hand.” This, therefore, was evidently either the Passover or Pentecost in the *second* year, that is the *second* Passover or the *second* Pentecost after Pilate’s removal. Vitellius “was received by the people of the Jews with great respect. Having been there three days, he took away the High Priesthood from Jonathan, and gave it to his brother Theophilus.—And on the fourth day after his arrival, receiving letters which brought an account of the death of Tiberius, he took an oath of the people to Caius.”

This feast of the Jews, at which Vitellius was present in Jerusalem, whether a Passover or a Pentecost, was evidently the first Passover or the first Pentecost after the death of Tiberius, because Vitellius then first of all received intelligence of

that event; intelligence which could not be delayed above a few months in its passage from Italy into Asia. It was also, as we have seen, the *second* Passover or Pentecost after Pilate's removal by Vitellius. The *first* Passover therefore, *after* Pilate's removal must have been the *first* Passover *before* the death of Tiberius, that is, the Passover J. P. 4749; for Tiberius died on the 16th of March J. P. 4750. Now Pilate was removed after having been Governor of Judea for ten years. J. P. 4749 - 10 = J. P. 4739. Consequently Pilate was appointed Governor of Judea before the Passover J. P. 4739, and was therefore undoubtedly the Governor of Judea, as St. Luke observes, when "the word of God came unto John" in the Spring of that year. I deem this a sufficient solution of the difficulty, and would refer to the pages of Lardner those who are desirous of a more enlarged view of the objection.



SECTION III.

Considerations upon John, chap. ii. ver. 20.



AT the first Passover in his ministry Jesus was present at Jerusalem, and standing in the midst of the temple, he said, “ Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?”

Almost all, if not all the modern Protestant commentators conceive this assertion of the Jews to relate to those repairs and alterations which Herod made in the temple of Jerusalem, and which he commenced, according to Josephus,^a in the eighteenth year of his reign ; but they have felt considerable difficulty in reconciling this opinion with the actual fact. The first Passover in our Saviour’s ministry was, according to our calculations, the Passover J. P. 4740. The eighteenth

^a See upon the subject of the present section Antiq. lib. xv cap. 14, and lib. xx. cap. 8.

year of Herod's reign, reckoning from his declaration as King by the Senate of Rome, corresponds to J. P. 4692, to which if we add 46 years, it will bring us to J. P. 4738;—two years before the time at which the words were spoken. Again, the eighteenth year of Herod's reign, reckoning from the death of Antigonus, corresponds to J. P. 4694, to which if we add 46 years, it will exactly bring us to J. P. 4740, the time at which the words were spoken. In the former case, therefore, the assertion is not accurate. But the latter date is that usually preferred by learned men, in order to harmonize the taunt of the Jews with truth. And that date certainly will effect the purpose for which it is produced; but I very much question whether the Jews had in view the alterations and repairs of Herod in the temple at all, and the following are the grounds of that opinion.

1st, I conceive that the Jews did not mean by saying “that the temple was 46 years in building,” to assert that the temple “began to be built 46 years before, and afterwards received continually till that time some additional ornament,”^b because the words of the Evangelist do not appear capable of bearing such an interpretation. The expression which St. John puts into the mouth of the Jews

^b Le Clerc's Harmony, Dissert. i. §. 2.

is this τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ἑξ ἔτεσιν ᾠκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος, and nothing can be more exact than the translation of the authorized English version, “Forty and six years was this temple in building,” that is, this temple, when it was built, occupied the space of forty and six years in building; a sense which by no means corresponds with that which is attempted to be assigned to the passage by Le Clerc. In order to make it bear that sense, it should have been translated thus,—“Forty and six years has this temple been building,” a translation to which the tense and meaning of ᾠκοδομήθη is directly adverse.

2dly, If the Jews did not mean that the temple had been building for the space of 46 years, they must have meant that, when built, it was built in the space of 46 years. This, as we have seen, is the only proper sense of their words; but it is a sense in which they cannot with any truth or propriety be applied to the operations of Herod. 1st, The temple itself was not *built* by Herod at all, he only repaired it. “Josephus observes that Herod durst not presume to enter into the Holy Place himself; because not being a priest, he stood prohibited by the law; but that he committed the care of this part of the work to the Priests themselves: from whence it plainly appears that the Holy Place was not pulled down, but only some alterations made

in it." So much for the fact. With regard to the time occupied in making these alterations, it is distinctly upon record that what was done to that part of the temple, into which none but Priests could enter, was finished by them in one year and six months. 2d, The galleries and the outer inclosures were certainly rebuilt, but as certainly rebuilt in *eight* years. 3d, The completion of the whole undertaking did not take place until the reign of Nero. I have my doubts, however, whether the whole of the intermediate time was occupied in the actual process of repairs, because Josephus states, that what was done in Nero's time was in consequence of the sinking of the foundations. But this is not a matter of much importance. It is plain from the above remarks, that to whichever of the three circumstances we apply the words of the Jews, whether to the repairs of the temple itself by the Priests, or to the rebuilding of the walls and galleries,—or to the final completion of the whole in Nero's reign, it cannot be said in any way to have been built in 46 years. The consequence to be deduced from this conclusion is, that the Jews in all probability did not intend to refer to the alterations of Herod in the temple.

3d, That the Jews did not intend to refer to Herod's alterations will be still further evident, if we consider that neither the Jews, nor the Scriptures ever regarded Herod's temple as distinct from that of "Zerubbabel."—The Jews never make mention of any more than *two* temples, looking upon Herod's only as "Zerubbabel's repaired." So says Beausobre.^d And in Scripture we certainly find the same opinion. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts," (Haggai ii. 9.) that is, by being honoured with the presence and preaching of the Messiah; for in other respects it was greatly inferior. If, however, Herod's operations are to be considered, not merely as improvements, but as a renovation of the whole building; if they are to be looked upon in short as constituting a *third* temple, the words of Scripture were not fulfilled. The glory of the second temple was in that case not superior to the glory of the first, but far inferior to it; and it was the glory of the third which was superior to the glory of the two former. It is therefore much more natural to imagine that the Jews were speaking of the time which the temple of Zerubbabel had originally occupied, or at least was generally supposed to have occupied in building.

^d Ubi supra.

4th. If we apply to the first book of Ezra for information as to the time in which the temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, it certainly does not at first sight bear out the assertion of the Jews.—The decree of permission to “go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God) which is in Jerusalem,” was issued in the first year of Cyrus.^c The earliest period which can be assigned to this decree is the year J. P. 4176, the year in which Cyrus conquered Babylon, in right of his dominion over which city it was that he issued the decree. But the usual, perhaps more accurate, date is J. P. 4178. We read in the 6th chapter of the first book of Ezra, that after several interruptions “this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the King,” the son of Hystaspes, that is, about the month of February J. P. 4198 or 4199. But, taking the utmost limits here pointed out, $4199 - 4176 =$ only 23 instead of 46 years.—The assertion therefore of the Jews, if it referred to the original building of the second temple, was undoubtedly very flagrantly incorrect. But, notwithstanding this inaccuracy, I still think that they spoke of Zerubbabel’s temple, because I find in the Christian Fathers some very distinct

^c 1 Ezra, chap. i.

traces of the existence of a tradition that the building of Zerubbabel's temple did last for 46 years.—And if such an opinion can be proved to have existed amongst the Jews, it will be sufficient for our present purpose. For we are not bound to shew that the opinion was true, but only that the Jews who uttered it thought it true. The Evangelist is merely recording what they said, and if we can make out the sense in which they said it, it is a matter of little consequence whether it was correct or false.

Now we meet in the first book of the *Stromata* of Clemens Alexandrinus with some considerations upon the celebrated prophecy of Daniel. — In Daniel, ch. ix. 25, are the following predictions: “Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be *seven* weeks and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” The seven weeks of years Clemens refers to the building of the wall and the street in troublous times, and the building of the wall and of the street he interprets of the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel; and of this rebuilding of the temple he says, ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἐν ΕΠΤΑ ἐβδομάσιν ὠκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς, τοῦτο φανερόν ἐστι,

καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ "Εσδρα γέγραπται.[†] "Now it is evident that the temple was built in seven weeks, (that is within seven weeks,) because it is so recorded in the book of Esdras."—But when we turn to the book of Esdras, we find, as has been already shewn, that he says no such thing.—The idea must therefore have arisen from some erroneous interpretation of that writer.—Now what this erroneous mode of interpretation was, we are distinctly told in a treatise which improperly goes under the name of Cyprian,[‡] and has been inserted with others in his works. That ancient author says,—"*Templum . . . destructum . . . iterum per 46 annos est ædificatum.*" Again, a little after, he observes,—"*Restitutum est ergo templum . . . annis 46. . . . Cum a die illo quo reversus est in terrâ suâ Judæorum populus regnavit Cyrus Persarum annis 31. Post quem Cambyzes annis 9, et impleti sunt 40.—Post annos autem 40 regnat Smerdis Magus mensibus septem, qui menses a nobis non computantur.—Quare? Quoniam in septimo mense Cyri fundamenta Templi posuerunt, et*

[†] Strom. lib. i. p. 394.

[‡] In another tract, entitled "*de Montibus Sina et Sion,*" and falsely inscribed to Cyprian, there are several remarks on the mystical meaning of the number 46, among which is the following: *Vel quia Salomon quadriaginta sex annis templum Deo fabricaverit.* Op. Cypr. ed. Rigalt. p. 461. This passage affords an additional proof that the interpretation, which refers John ii. 20. to the repairs made by Herod, was not then known.

exinde usque ad annum secundum Darii opus in eo non confecerunt. Tum prophetant Aggeus et Zacharias, per quos exhortatus est eos Dominus et unanimes accesserunt et in quadriennio residuum opus Templi consummaverunt. Quod ipsum quidem in primo libro Esdræ manifeste demonstratur, quod sexto anno Darii Templum Dei sit per omnia consummatum. Ad 40 adjiciamus Darii 6 et fient 40 et 6.”^h From this statement we perceive that the error, which led both Clemens and this anonymous writer to suppose that 46 years had been employed in rebuilding the temple, was a false computation of the years of Cyrus, and supposing that the first year, in which Ezra says he sent forth his decree permitting the restoration of the temple, was the first year of his reign as King of Persia alone, whereas it was in fact more than twenty years later, namely, the first of his reign after the conquest, and as King of Babylon.—This error also appears to have been so generally followed, that Clemens says it is *quite evident* that the temple of Zerubbabel was about seven weeks of years in rebuilding.—Such then was the common opinion in the second century after Christ, and hence I think we may very reasonably conjecture that it prevailed also in our Saviour’s time amongst

^h Appendix ad Cypr. Opera, p. 68, edit. Amstelod. 1691. in tract. “de Paschâ Computus,” where there is much more to the same purpose.

the Jews, and was the opinion alluded to by those who addressed him and said, "Forty and six years was this temple in building."

I do not introduce this interpretation of the words of St. John as *new*, though I have no where met with the illustrations which I have here given. It was indeed the universal mode of solution so late as the times of Sigonius, in whose work "*De Republicâ Hebræorum*"ⁱ it is distinctly stated.—The history of its subsequent rejection is rather curious.—Casaubon,^k so far as I have observed, was the first to renounce it, but for no better reason, as it would appear, than because it was an opinion of the Catholics, and patronized by Maldonatus.^l Arguments against its propriety he has produced none. Beausobre^m next treats it with the same supercilious contempt, and Lardner, by omitting altogether any mention of it in his *Credibility*, has almost obliterated it from the remembrance of the learned. On this account I have produced the preceding considerations which I leave with the reader, as my ground for

ⁱ Cap. v. p. 81, 82. Sigonius died A. D. 1584.

^k Exercit. in Baron. xiii. xxiii. p. 247.

^l "Maledicus ille Maldonatus" is the mild and elegant epithet he bestows upon him.

^m Introd. p. 18.

thinking that John, ch. ii. 20, cannot be made subservient to the establishment or refutation of any system of chronology with regard to our Saviour's life.—The Jews, I conceive, meant to say that the temple “was 46 years in building,” when first erected by Zerubbabel, and therefore the verse is of no use in a chronological point of view. But those who differ from me upon this subject may reconcile it to my hypothesis by following the method, which I have borrowed from Lardner and stated in the commencement of this section.



CHAP. VII.

PROBABLE DATE OF OUR SAVIOUR'S CRUCIFIXION.

SECTION I.

Duration of our Saviour's Ministry.

HAD chronologers been contented to be guided in their decisions by the plain and positive declarations of the Evangelists without endeavouring, by the transposition of chapters and conjectural emendations of the text, to compel the New Testament to confirm their preconceived and predetermined theories, there could have been no serious difficulty in settling the duration of our Saviour's ministry. St. John is supposed to have written his Gospel after all the other Evangelists, and to have composed it, as we learn from the traditions of the church, with the double view of supplying the omissions of his precursors, and meeting the heresies and temper of the times in which he lived; now there is no point in which St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke are more

particularly obscure than the dates of the events which they have recorded in the ministry of our Lord, and the order in which those events succeeded each other. St. Luke and St. Mark very frequently pursue the same arrangement, but that of St. Matthew is materially different. In confirmation therefore of the supposed intention of St. John in the composition of his history, we find nothing in which he is more clear and precise than the orderly succession of the circumstances he relates. He seems to have made it his peculiar care to elucidate the darkness of the other Evangelists upon this subject, by giving an account of the actions of Jesus in a regular series; and I do not at this moment recollect a single instance either of anticipation or retrospection throughout the whole course of his narrative. Now St. John has distinctly noticed three several Passovers in our Saviour's ministry, a first, a second, and a third after his baptism, the last of which he plainly designates as the Passover of the crucifixion, without giving any hint, or making use of any expression which would intimate that he left any Passover unnoticed. It would seem therefore to have been the opinion of St. John, and his opinion ought to be held decisive, that our Saviour's ministry, reckoning its duration from the period of his baptism to his death, did not continue quite three years. If, as we have agreed in the pre-

ceding chapters, our Lord was baptized in the month of November, it may be estimated at about two years and a half. Such also is the opinion of some very ancient and respectable Christian writers: it is certainly the opinion of Epiphanius, perhaps also of Tertullian, and at the conclusion of his life, and in his most celebrated and judicious work, of the learned Origen: it is likewise asserted by the composers of the Harmonies attributed to Tatian and Ammonius; by the author of the second epistle of Clement to the Romans; and by the compilers of the Apostolical Constitutions,^a and of the interpolated Epistles of Ignatius.^b It is right however to observe, that there is a great and irreconcilable difference of opinion amongst several of the Fathers upon the subject; a difference, therefore, which leaves us at full liberty to draw our own conclusions from the Sacred Writings themselves, without endeavouring to make our calculations correspond with the fanciful or incorrect notions and prejudices of each various author. With this remark I would very gladly have dismissed the subject, and relying upon the authority of St. John, as before stated, have proceeded to deduce the date of the crucifixion from that statement; but I am precluded from

^a Cotelarii Patr. Apostol. vol. I. p. 197.

^b Epist. ad Trall.

thus quitting the difficulty by the objections of those who have framed a different hypothesis, and attempted to prove, from the Gospel of St. John itself, that the number of Passovers ought to be either extended to more, or confined to fewer than three.

I. There are some who would extend the number of Passovers in our Saviour's ministry to four or five, and the number of years to somewhat more than three or four. To accomplish this object they maintain that, besides the three Passovers already enumerated, there is another to be found in the first verse of the fifth chapter of St. John : "After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

1. It is a first and obvious remark upon this verse, that the passage cannot be considered as decisive in favour of the opinion which it is produced to support, because it does not assert what, in order to answer the end desired, it ought to assert, that this feast was a Passover : it merely states, that "after this there was a feast of the Jews," and whether it was or was not a paschal feast, is a legitimate subject of doubt and enquiry.

Now that this feast was *not* a Passover would appear probable from the tenor of the Evangelist's

narrative. St. John relates that our Saviour^c remained in Judea after the first Passover in his ministry until he “knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John.” He then^d “left Judea and departed again into Galilee.” In his passage through Samaria it was that he met and conversed with the woman of Sychar at Jacob’s well, and converted many of the Samaritans. Two days after this^e “he departed thence and went into Galilee,” and there healed the son of the nobleman of Capernaum. “After this,” observes the Evangelist, “there was *a* feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” It is therefore natural to imagine that this was a feast of Pentecost or of Tabernacles, rather than a Passover, because there is nothing necessarily to imply the lapse of so great a space of time, as intervened between Passover and Passover.

On the other hand, however, it has been argued that this was a Passover from what Jesus said to his disciples whilst at Sychar in his journey through Samaria. “Say not ye, There are yet four months and then cometh harvest.”^f From this expression they imagine that it wanted four months to the

^c Chap. iv. 1.

^d Ver. 3.

^e Ver. 43.

^f Chap. iv. 35.

time of harvest, that is, it was about four months before the Passover or *Pentecost*, or rather a time between the two, when our Saviour uttered this remark ; consequently the next of the three great feasts of the Jews which would demand our Saviour's appearance at Jerusalem was the Passover. Now as he had so lately left Judea for fear of the Pharisees, nothing but one of the great feasts would, it is supposed, so soon have carried him thither again. Therefore they conclude that the feast mentioned in ch. v. 1, must have been a Passover. This inference would have been entitled to much respect, had it been at all certain that our Saviour meant to designate by the expression in question the distance between the time at which he was speaking and the time of harvest: but it is the opinion of some of the best commentators, and now I believe the opinion most generally received and deduced from the form of the sentence itself, that our Saviour in these words merely alluded to a proverbial phrase, or a common idea current amongst the Jews, that between the seed-time and harvest there usually elapsed a period of four months; for an expression somewhat similar in St. Matthew's Gospel^s is applied to a prevailing proverb. That it did not at the time want four months to harvest, that is, that

^s Chap. xiv. 2.

it was not then the middle of Winter, or about January, is further inferred from the extreme weariness of our Saviour, to which the heat is supposed to have much contributed, from his sitting down at the well to wait the return of his disciples with meat, instead of accompanying them into the city, as, if it had been Winter, he would most probably have done, and from what he himself immediately adds in the very same verse,—“Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.” This last assertion has much more the appearance of being derived from the contemplation of the actual face of the country, as it was then spread before him, than the one before mentioned, and would almost seem to determine the period at which it was made to have been in the midst of the harvest, instead of four months before it. Certainly it is to be allowed that in these words our Saviour’s principal reference was to the spiritual harvest which his disciples might gather into the garner of their Lord from the ready-minded and believing Samaritans; but it is also equally natural to suppose that our Saviour was led to the use of this peculiar metaphor by the existing appearances of Nature around him, which, throughout his ministry, were the general source of his language and instruction. Now had this incident occurred four months before the harvest,

that is, in the middle of Winter, the desolation of the surrounding scene could scarcely have recalled to his mind the beauties and the riches of the fields, ripe and ready for the reapers' labours. Such an allusion would have surely been unnatural at such a season, and therefore contrary to the simplicity of our Lord, who seldom strayed to a distance for his illustrations, but drew them in the fulness of his wisdom from the most appropriate and immediate objects which presented themselves to his view, knowing that by this means he would render himself most intelligible to his hearers, and produce the deepest impression both upon their hearts and memories. Hence we are led to conceive that the words "behold, lift up your eyes and look on the fields," were spoken, as their very sound and dramatic earnestness would appear to intimate, at a time when the fields were in reality white already to the harvest," or in other words between the Passover and Pentecost, the season of the harvest throughout the whole of Judea. If this be admitted, it is a most probable inference, that the feast at which our Saviour next went to Jerusalem, that is, the feast mentioned, John v. 1. was either a feast of Pentecost or of Tabernacles, because these were the next ensuing feasts at which his presence was required by the Mosaic law. The history therefore of this portion of our Lord's ministry is as follows : At his first Passover

he went up to Jerusalem, and continued in Judea for two or three weeks after it, baptizing, “though he himself baptized not, but his disciples.”^b His rapid and extensive success having excited the observation of the Pharisees, he thought it prudent to quit Judea, and passing through Samaria in the midst of the harvest impressed upon his disciples the readiness of the Samaritans to receive his doctrines by an illustration very beautifully drawn from the scenes and operations which were passing before their eyes. He then continued his journey into Galilee,^c and after remaining there for a few weeks returned again to Jerusalem, according to Cyril and Chrysostom, to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, or, according to others, at a somewhat later period to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles.

2. That the feast mentioned John v. 1, was *not* a Passover may further be argued from the manner in which the Evangelist has expressed himself:

Μετὰ ταῦτα, says St. John, ἡνέορτη (not ἡέορτη) τῶν Ἰουδαίων,—“After this there was *a* feast (not

^b John iv. 2.

^c It was but a three days’ journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, and consequently there is no improbability in supposing our Saviour to have gone thither, and returned again to the feast of Pentecost or Tabernacles.

the feast) of the Jews.” Now there is no part of the New Testament in which *ἐορτή* without the article is ever known to be unequivocally used to express the feast of the Passover; nor is the article ever prefixed to *ἐορτή* when it signifies a feast different from the Passover without the immediate addition of some explanatory phrase, to prove that the Passover was not meant: St. John, ch. vii. 2, where he speaks of the feast of the Tabernacles as *Ἡ ἐορτή τῶν Ἰουδαίων*, he very carefully subjoins the words *ἡ σκηνοπηγία*, to prevent any confusion or mistake. Nay more, even in all those passages in which the Passover is distinctly spoken of by name, as *τὸ πάσχα*, or *ἐορτή τῶν ἁζύμων*, the article is still in every instance inserted as a sort of necessary adjunct: whilst on the other hand there are several passages in which *ἡ ἐορτή* alone implies the Passover, without the addition of *τὸ πάσχα* or *τῶν ἁζύμων*. When I make these assertions, I am fully aware that from each of the first three Evangelists a passage has been produced in which *ἐορτή*, without the article, does most certainly refer to the Paschal feast, and therefore may be supposed to controvert the preceding canon: but I apprehend that upon an impartial examination the alleged instances will not be found to bear at all upon the present question. In St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, the phrase alluded to is precisely the same, and is

applied also to the same circumstance,^k so that one investigation will suffice for the whole, and determine the question either in the negative or affirmative. I shall quote and argue upon the verse as it stands in St. Matthew: Κατὰ δὲ ἑορτὴν εἰώθει ὁ ἡγεμὼν ἀπολύειν ἓνα τῷ ὄχλῳ δέσμιον, ὃν ᾗθελον. “Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.” Such is the version of the passage in our English Bibles, which, though perfectly correct in point of sense, does not appear to convey with exactness the idiom of the original. Καθ’ ἑορτὴν is an idiomatical phrase, similar and equivalent to κατ’ ἔτος,^l the construction of which depends upon πᾶς or ἕκαστος understood. In this manner we are taught to supply the ellipsis by St. Luke, who, when he tells us that the prophets were read in the synagogues every sabbath-day, uses the expression κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον.^m Καθ’ ἑορτὴν therefore means κατὰ πᾶσαν ἑορτὴν, or feast by feast, in the same manner as κατ’ ἔτος means year by year, or every year, (κατὰ πᾶν ἔτος;) and as the propriety and meaning of the phrase, κατ’ ἔτος would be destroyed by the insertion of the article τὸ, so to render the phrase καθ’ ἑορτὴν analogous in its construction, it was necessary that

^k Matth. xxvii. 15. Mark xiv. 2. Luke xxiii. 17.

^l Luke ii. 42.

^m Acts xiii. 27.

the Evangelists should here also drop the article before *ἐορτήν*, which we consequently find that they have done. This being the case, I cannot regard the phrase *καθ' ἐορτήν* as containing any objection whatever to the general truth of the remark before laid down with regard to the defeat of the article, or as justifying us in considering *ἐορτή* when alone to refer, in any instance or author, to *the* great feast of the Passover; for, as far as my observation and remembrance reach, I do not recollect that I have met with any deviation from the rule, even in the writings of Josephus. Josephus, I believe, as well as the sacred writers, always distinguishes the Paschal from other feasts by the use of the definitive article.

If the preceding arguments be correct, it is evident that those, who still choose to maintain that John v. 1, refers to a Passover, must change the reading of the passage, and substitute *ἡ ἐορτή* for *ἐορτή* in the text. This is the course pursued by Macknight, who upon the strength of a few later manuscripts, or depending perhaps upon the authority of Theophylact, has actually made the proposed alteration, and founded all his reasonings upon the assumption of its correctness, without even hinting to his reader that it was neither the best, nor the commonly received reading. This is very unfair. "It is true" (as Bishop Marsh

observes)" "that several Greek MSS. (but not the printed text) have ἡ ἐορτή, with the article, as if the grand festival of the Passover was meant, κατ' ἐξοχήν, but Griesbach in his note to John v. 1. says, that the quotation of Origen axactly agrees with our common text, which is a strong argument in favour of its authenticity. The article is likewise omitted in the Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Beza, and many others, indeed most of the Greek MSS." To this we may add, that even Irenæus himself, who erroneously interprets the verse, as if it alluded to a Passover, gives us no reason to suppose, from the manner in which he speaks of it, that the article existed in the copy which he used ; but as the passage in which he touches upon the subject is now only to be found in a Latin translation, we cannot of course speak with so much certainty as we might have done had the original itself remained. Compare now the weight of testimony in favour of the insertion or omission of the article, and I think there will be no hesitation in saying on which side the balance preponderates. The three most ancient and respected manuscripts, confirmed by the older and weightier testimony of Origen, are ignorant of its existence. On the other hand several less authoritative and more modern manuscripts, sup-

ⁿ Michaelis vol. III. Notes, p. 60.

ported by the later and weaker testimony of Theophylact, have inserted it. Even thus the argument is decidedly for its rejection; but when we consider, that, after the fourth century, the idea of *four* Passovers in our Saviour's ministry most generally prevailed, and that those later manuscripts were produced and those later Fathers wrote under the influence of that opinion, it is no unnatural supposition to conjecture that the insertion of the article was the result of their preconceived hypothesis, and, therefore that their testimony is but of little comparative value, when found to be opposed by unbiassed writers. Hence I conclude that the autograph of St. John most probable contained ἐορτή without the article, and that ἐορτή without the article is most naturally and properly interpreted, when it is interpreted of some Jewish feast distinct from the great solemnity of the Passover.

3. The idea of four Passovers in our Saviour's ministry was totally unknown to the Christian Fathers of the first three centuries. Eusebius of Cæsarea in the fourth century, was, as is generally allowed, the first who gave currency, if not its original introduction, to this extended period, the source and grounds of which opinion I will now endeavour to trace.

Phlegon of Tralles in the second century has recorded a remarkable eclipse which took place in the 202d Olympiad, and seems, though there is some doubt on the point,^o to have fixed it to the 4th year of that Olympiad. This eclipse many of the early Christians mistook, or wished to be acknowledged, for the preternatural darkness at our Saviour's crucifixion. It seems therefore most probable, says Whiston, that "the determination of the death of Christ to the 4th year of the 202d Olympiad and the 19th of Tiberius was directly taken from the testimony of Phlegon by Eusebius and others, and that the other observations from the number of Passovers or years of our Saviour's ministry, as more uncertain, were fitted to it."^p But this is a mere conjecture, and seems to be positively contradicted by Eusebius himself, who assigns two other and separate reasons for his opinion.

^o The words of Phlegon as given us by Eusebius are these: Τῷ Δ' ἔτει τῆς εβ' Ὀλυμπιάδος ἐγένετο ἑκλειψις ἡλίου μεγίστη τῶν ἐγνωρισμενῶν πρότερον. "In the *fourth* year of the 202d Olympiad, there was an Eclipse of the Sun the greatest of any known before that time." Kepler however suspects that the particle δὲ *but* was mistaken for the numeral letter δ. *four* and ought to be translated "in *the* year of the 202d Olympiad," that is, in the first year of that Olympiad, or the year in which it began.—See Syker's Dissertation on the Eclipse mentioned by Phlegon." Lond. 8vo. 1732.

^p Testimony of Phlegon vindicated, p. 37.

In his history,⁴ Eusebius asserts that οὐδ' ὅλος τετραέτης ἀπόδεικνυται τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν διδασκαλίας χρόνος, and endeavours to establish his conclusion by a consideration of the succession of the Jewish High Priests. Scripture, he says, informs us that the ministry of our Saviour took place when Annas and Caiaphas were High Priests, meaning to intimate that it occupied the space of time which elapsed between their respective priesthoods, beginning in that of Annas and terminating in that of Caiaphas. Such is the singular and forced interpretation which he gives to the expression ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέων Ἄννα καὶ Καϊάφα in St. Luke. Having laid down these premises, he then proceeds to observe, that in those unsettled times few, if any, of the Jewish High Priests were permitted by the Roman governors to retain their office for more than a year; that Josephus enumerates four individuals who held the office between Annas and Caiaphas, and that consequently the duration of our Saviour's ministry did not extend to quite four years—οὐκ οὐν ὁ σύμπας οὐδ' ὅλος, κ. τ. λ. How unsound this conclusion is, how lamely borne out, even by the untenable premises which he assumes, it is unnecessary to observe, and without any better foundation his opinion would scarce be deserving of a moment's thought. But he has

⁴ Lib. i. c. 10.

given us another reason for his assertion in his “*Demonstratio Evangelica*,” namely, a prophecy of Daniel and the Gospel of St. John. The ground upon which he conceives St. John to have mentioned four Passovers in our Saviour’s ministry are the same as those which we have already considered. The prophecy of Daniel which he conceives to predict the same number is ch. ix. 27. “He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and *in the midst of the week* he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” The half week here spoken of he considers to be a prediction of the duration of our Lord’s ministry, and therefore fixes it at three years and a half.^r

^r Had I considered mystical interpretations of the prophetic passages in Holy Writ as admissible proofs of historical facts, it would have been no difficult matter to have demonstrated that our Saviour’s ministry could not have lasted quite three years. — “Our Saviour himself” (says Fleming in his discourse on the Rise and Fall of Papacy, p. 19.) calls the years of his ministry days, saying, *I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected*. Luke xiii. 32.—But all such modes of reasoning I deem inadmissible, until the facts to which they refer have been established by other and independent evidence.—History is the interpreter of prophecy, and it is a most unsafe method of proceeding to make prophecy the interpreter of any doubtful point in history.—On this account I have throughout this Dissertation upon the chronology of our Saviour’s life avoided every allusion to the seventy weeks of Daniel.—Of the errors, into which their preconceived notions about the meaning and explanation of that prophecy have led both Eusebius and Mann, no one can be ignorant.

The whole argument is thus shortly summed up by him : — 'Ιστορεῖται δὲ ὁ πᾶς τῆς διδασκαλίας καὶ παραδξαοποιίας ὁμοῦ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν χρόνος τριῶν ἡμισυ γεγωνῶς ἑτῶν, ὅπέρ ἐστιν ἑβδομάδος ἡμισυ· τοῦτό πως Ἰωάννης ὁ Ἐυαγγελιστῆς ἀκριβῶς ἐφιστᾷσιν αὐτοῦ τῷ Ἐυαγγελίῳ παραστήσει.^s Yet the very wording of the passage shews how dubious he was of the accuracy of his position : and whilst the insertion of *πως, quodammodo, in some measure*, proves the little dependence he had upon his mode of interpreting St. John, ch. v. 1., the addition of ἀκριβῶς ἐφιστᾷσιν seems to mark that the interpretation was confined to a chosen, and, as he styles them, an intelligent few.

Such then are the arguments in defence of the hypothesis of a *four* year's ministry of our Saviour, but I cannot persuade myself that any one will be satisfied of its truth, whether they deduce their opinion from the tradition, or the reasoning upon which it is built. The tradition is late and scanty — the reasoning obscure and inconclusive.

II. If the ministry of our Saviour cannot with propriety be extended to four, still less can it be extended to five Passovers ; and though this unauthorized number is defended by names so

^s Dem. Ev. Lib. viii. p. 400.

celebrated as those of Scaliger and Sir I. Newton, I shall not trouble myself with any further refutation than that which may be derived from a short and simple statement of its origin. I enter upon this statement the rather because the reasons of this hypothesis seem not to be generally understood.¹

In the sixth chapter of his Gospel, St. Luke informs us that "it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first that he (Jesus) went through the corn-fields, and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-day?" The same circumstance, the same act on the part of the disciples, and the same accusation on the part of the Pharisees is related by St. Matthew in ch. xii. and St. Mark in ch. ii. I will not here enter into any disquisition as to the precise meaning of *σάββατον δευτερόπρωτον*, because it is unnecessary to the

¹ "Others again, of whom Macknight is one, have augmented the number (of Passovers) to five, the reason of which I have not been able to discover." Marsh's *Michaelis*, vol. III. Notes, p. 61.—Sir Isaac Newton has distinctly pointed out the grounds upon which he embraced this hypothesis, and they are the same as those mentioned by Petavius.—See his *Obs. on Daniel*, ch. ix.

validity of the inference to be drawn. If we adopt the opinion of Scaliger, which Lamy^u details and perhaps justly approves, this incident occurred within a few days after the Passover. But it is at any rate evident first, that it must have taken place during harvest, and therefore *before* the feast of Pentecost, because at no other period of the year could they have met with corn in the fields; and secondly, that it must have taken place *after* the feast of the Passover, because before that festival it was not permitted to the Jews to pull ears of corn on any day. Before the sheaf had been offered to God, as the first-fruits of the harvest on the second day of the feast of unleavened bread, it was unlawful to reap any corn at all. Had therefore this incident occurred before the Passover, the censure passed upon the disciples would not only have been for violating the law of the sabbath by plucking ears of corn on that holy day of rest, but also for violating the law of Moses in another point, by plucking, which they deemed equivalent to reaping, ears of corn, at a time when it was forbidden by a specific ordi-

^u “ Ne teram tempus diversas opiniones confutando : quæ mihi verisimilior videatur, paucis dicam. Ergo opinor cum Scaligero, sabbatum secundo-primum illud esse quod incidebat in primam ex his septem hebdomadibus, quæ ab oblato manipulo novæ frugis, alterâ die post Pascha, numerabantur usque ad diem Pentecostes.”

Lamy, App. Chron. Part II. ch. 6. p. 201.

nance of their religion. We have here, therefore, in every one of the first three Gospels the most distinct and unequivocal traces of *one* Passover at least between the baptism and death of our Saviour, besides that at which we know he was crucified. Now it is supposed, as we have before remarked, that St. John composed his Gospel to supply the omissions of the former Evangelists. But if the Passover here alluded to be one of those mentioned by St. John, he did not in this instance supply an omission, but confirm a statement which had before been made. Upon this very weak foundation those writers conceived that the Passover alluded to in the first three Gospels must be different from any of the four, which they imagined to have been recorded by St. John, and consequently they held that the number of Passovers in our Saviour's ministry amounted altogether to five. Such is the account given of the rise and reason of this hypothesis by Petavius in the following passage, which may be deemed of itself a sufficient confutation.—“Horum (that is of those who maintain four or five Passovers in our Lord's ministry,) est vis omnis in Joannis, v. 1. posita; quod ibi dies festus concipiatur, quem negant alium videri posse, quàm Pascha. Ab eo verò quod capite vi. 4. sequitur omninò distinguendum videtur. Ex quo tria ante τὸ σταυρώσιμον conficiunt. Rursus illud Pascha, quod Joannis vi. 4.

commemoratur et ante quod millia hominum quinque totidem panibus saturata sunt, ab eo diversum est, quod a tribus reliquis Evangelistis tacite significatur, quando Christum per sata iter habuisse scribunt. Id enim per azymorum ferias contigit. Nam illa per segetes ambulatio, Matth. xii., Marc. ii. 22. Lucæ vi. narratur. Secundum quam miraculum illud saturatæ plebis, Matth. xiv. Marci vi. Lucæ ix. describitur. Igitur cum Sabbatum Deuteroproton per quod sata perambulata sunt Paschate posterius sit, panum vero miraculum Paschate prius, duo esse, distinctaque necesse Paschata Nihil igitur habent quarti quintive Paschatis authores, quo nos in suam sententiam cogant.”^v

III. There are some who, instead of extending, would limit the number of Passovers in our Saviour’s ministry to two, and confine its duration to one year and a half. As the Gospel of St. John at present stands it is quite inconsistent with such an hypothesis. In ch. vi. ver. 4, we have distinct mention of a *third* Passover, and if that verse be left in its present state, and that chapter in its present position, the difficulty is insurmountable. To remove this difficulty it has been proposed to remove ch. vi. and place it before ch. v. and then either to elide verse 4 altogether, or else to correct

^v De Doctr. Temp. lib. xii. cap. 17. p. 447.

it in such a manner as to avoid the inference to which the common reading tends. Such being the preliminary steps which are on all hands allowed to be absolutely necessary to the reception of this contracted view of our Lord's ministry, it will only be necessary for us, in order to overturn it, to shew that these steps are quite unauthorized by antiquity, and by no means established by the course of reasoning which has been adopted for their proof.

If we look to the writings of the Fathers, and to the existing manuscripts and versions of the New Testament, we shall find no traces whatever of any transposition of chapters in St. John. Yet it is certainly to be imagined, that, if such a change in the arrangement of the parts of his Gospel had taken place in later times, there would in some of these various transcripts and quotations have been some hint of the dislocation which they had suffered. So strongly does one learned writer^w appear to have been embarrassed with this objection to the change of order in the chapters, that, being unable to attribute the transposition with any degree of probability to the carelessness of transcribers, he boldly imputes it to the original

^w "Doctissimus Petitus" as Mann styles him, *de annis Christi*, p. 170.

mistake of the author himself, and supposes the error to have existed in the very autograph of St. John. Such a conjecture can only rest upon its own merits, and powerful indeed ought to be the indications of its truth before it can be entitled to the slightest attention or respect. We are necessarily therefore compelled to an enumeration of the supposed *internal* signs of a derangement of the chapters in question.

Now the following have been alleged as intrinsic marks of the supposed transposition. "The last words of chap. v. are mentioned as spoken by Jesus in Jerusalem, and the words immediately following them in chap. vi, without any introduction or preparation whatever, represent him passing out of Galilee to the eastern side of the sea of Tiberias; but this is an easy sequel of the fourth chapter which left him in Galilee. Again, the end of the fifth chapter has the same easy connection with the beginning of the seventh, that the end of the fourth has with the beginning of the sixth. For in ch. v. verses 16 and 18, Jesus, in Jerusalem, is reasoning with the Jews, who were seeking to kill him;* and the seventh chapter opens with an account of his going into Galilee, because the Jews sought to kill him." But these

* Priestley Observ. on Harm. p. 42.

circumstances only shew that the transposition *might* be made without any injury to the connection of the Evangelist's narrative. They do not prove that it ought to be made. They do not prove that the present arrangement is improper, or attended with any of that absurdity which, as Mann would seem to intimate, is inconsistent with the common order and division of the chapters. So far, therefore, the reasoning must at least be regarded as inconclusive. To render it, however, somewhat more decisive, they remark in addition, that "as the chapters stand at present, the 6th represents Jesus teaching at Capernaum in Galilee, and yet the seventh begins with these words,—*'After these things Jesus walked in Galilee,'* as if he had been just arrived from some other territory."

Had this last observation been well-founded, it would have carried with it much weight. But though it sounds perfectly correct when we read only the English translation of the verse, yet when we turn to the Greek original itself, we shall be led to form a very different conclusion. The words of the Evangelist are these : Καὶ περιπατεῖ ὁ Ἰησοῦς μετὰ ταῦτα ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ. The sense of the passage is, "that after these things Jesus *continued* walking in Galilee;" for περιπατεῖ is in the imperfect tense, a tense which, as

every one knows, is used to express the *continuance* of an action. So far therefore is the beginning of the seventh chapter from leading us to suppose that Jesus had “just arrived in Galilee from some other territory,” that it would rather induce us to imagine that he had been there some time. So far, therefore, is it from forming an easy and proper sequel to the fifth chapter, which requires the former supposition, that it is absolutely adverse to any such connection, and agrees only with the sixth chapter, of which it will be found to be a regular continuation. The sixth chapter leaves Jesus in Galilee, and the seventh begins by marking his continuance there. I shall afterwards have occasion to make a more particular use of this passage of the Evangelist: at present I only produce it to shew that the proposed transposition of the chapters is as much refuted by internal as external evidence. Let us next proceed to examine the suggested alterations in the *text*.

In ch. vi. 4. St. John thus alludes to the second Passover in our Lord's ministry:—Ἦν δὲ ἐγγύς τὸ πάσχα ἢ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων. If the integrity and genuineness of this verse be allowed, it makes, with the Passover of the crucifixion, the whole number in our Lord's ministry to be three. To invalidate its testimony Vossius has mentioned a

conjectural omission of the words τὸ πάσχα, which is entirely unsupported by any ancient version or manuscript. Neither would this conjecture, even if admitted, effect the purpose for which it has been made. The expression ἡ ἐορτή, with the article prefixed, would still remain, and secure the meaning of the verse almost as satisfactorily as if the words τὸ πάσχα had been subjoined. Such however as the emendation is, it has been sanctioned both by Priestly and Mann, who, together with several other writers, have incorrectly declared it to have derived its origin from Vossius, and also to have received his approbation ; under which they contrive to shelter themselves by passing the usual and unmeaning encomiums which are so often poured forth by critics upon those with whom they happen to agree. That Vossius has *mentioned* this conjecture I have already stated ; but he has so mentioned it as to intimate that he was neither responsible for its origin, nor inclined to adopt it as an admissible or valid emendation of the text. His own opinion was that the verse in question referred to the propinquity of the Passover of the crucifixion, and as it might be urged against him that the very next chapter mentions a feast of Tabernacles as intervening between this Passover and the crucifixion, he anticipates the objection by asserting that it is only an instance of ὅσπερ οὖν πρότερον, which is so common to the Evangelists, and

endeavours to prove his position by a reference to the Gospel of St. Luke. The proof is very weak, and the interpretation so forced, that it certainly reflects but little credit upon his critical acumen to have advanced or defended it; but that he has done both, the following quotation is so clear a demonstration, that it is wonderful how any men who had read it could mistake his meaning:—
 “Quare nihil opus dicamus Joannis vi. 4. scriptum prius fuisse ἦν δὲ ἐγγύς ἡ ἑορτή τῶν Ἰουδαίων.
 in Scripturis non pauca sunt ὕστερα πρότερα et tale hic quoque esse ex Lucâ ostendimus.”^y

So little credit is due to the proposed omission of the words τὸ πάσχα, that Bishop Pearce appears to have acted a much wiser part in boldly declaring the whole verse to be an interpolation. It cannot be denied that the weight of external testimony is clearly against this opinion. If defended at all, therefore, it must be defended, like the preceding conjectures, by considerations deduced from other sources, and which it consequently becomes our duty to investigate.

1. It is said that no more than two Passovers—no longer a space of time than one year and a half

^y Dissert de temp. Dom. Passion. p. 84 in. vol. V. of Amsterdam edition, 1701.

can be inferred from the first three Gospels : but if St. John wrote his Gospel, as is generally believed, to supply the omissions of his predecessors, nothing could be more natural than to find a Passover mentioned by him which was not expressly noticed by others. His Gospel, therefore, is to be the interpreter of theirs. To make their Gospels the rule of our judgment with regard to his, is to invert the order of things.

2. It is said that the verse in St. John is introduced quite parenthetically, and that the third and fifth verses would read equally well without the fourth. This is very true, with this exception, that the transaction to which they relate would then no longer have any date attached to it. But what useful inference can be drawn from this remark ? There are many other cases in which though a verse might be dropped without detriment, yet no one would think himself authorized on that account to reject it. Why then should that mode of proceeding be recommended here ? The verse in question is very truly said to be a parenthetical note of time ; but if we can produce another instance from the New Testament, in which similar words are inserted in a manner apparently equally unnecessary, this objection must be given up, or else the same unsparing hand of correction be extended to every such passage.

This similar instance, however, we can produce from Acts xii. 4, where the words ἦσαν δὲ ἡμέραι τῶν ἄζύμων are inserted in a parenthesis in a manner exactly analogous to ἦν δὲ ἐγγὺς τὸ πάσχα in the chapter before us, and for the very same reason, namely, to mark the date and the time of the year at which the transaction occurred.

3. It is said, that St. John has inserted the note of time in this place, without any other end to answer than merely to mark the season. Be it so,—yet it proves nothing against the propriety of the insertion. But I maintain on the other hand that he had a peculiar object in view, and one strictly connected with the purpose for which he is supposed to have written his Gospel. In St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, the transactions of the last Passover are fully detailed. The *first* Passover after our Saviour's baptism seems also to have been distinctly alluded to by all three, when relating the incident of the disciples plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day; but there is not in any of them, when *separately* perused, any thing to mark the period at which the *second* Passover in our Lord's ministry occurred. St. John has supplied this omission. He has taken the trouble, as I conceive, for this very purpose to recount a fourth time a miracle,—the feeding of the five thousand, which had already been suffi-

ently related by the three former Evangelists, and as if to shew the end he had in view, he inserts in the very middle of his relation a parenthetical note of time, an allusion to a Passover, thus teaching us to infer that the place at which this second Passover in our Lord's ministry is to be added in the narratives of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, is *about* that part in which they are treating of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. Suppose St. John to have seen the other Gospels, and marked their want of chronological intimations, and nothing can more clearly account for his introduction of this verse, and also for the very place and manner of its introduction. It is a note of time inserted as a guide to us in our perusal of the other Gospels ; and in drawing up a harmony of the Evangelists, upon the hypothesis of three Passovers in the ministry of our Lord, I have found it of the greatest use and importance.

4. It is said that this Passover was quite otiose in our Saviour's ministry,—that he does not appear to have done any thing memorable at Jerusalem during its celebration, the very reverse of which was particularly the case in both the other Passovers, and in each of the other feasts which are mentioned. The reason is, because he was not present at Jerusalem at this Passover ; and St. John takes particular pains to account for his

absence, and thus at the same time explains why we meet with no notice of it in the former Gospels, a singularity which would otherwise have created a considerable degree of surprize. “After these things,” says St. John, “Jesus *continued* walking in Galilee, (though the Passover was near,) and would not walk in Judea because the Jews sought to kill him.” They had made this attempt upon his life at the very last feast at which he had attended, and therefore knowing that his hour was not yet come, he did not choose to tempt God by exposing his life to their enmity before the appointed time. At the following feast of Tabernacles, though he went up to Jerusalem, yet it was not openly nor till near the end of the feast. But at the next Passover, when the fulness of time was come, he was no longer influenced by this consideration. Thus we see at once how the whole narrative of St. John, as it at present stands, coheres and connects together and explains the various parts of which it is composed. Transpose the chapters and change the text, and the harmony is destroyed.

5. It is said that, with the exception of Irenæus, all the Fathers of the first three centuries were decidedly of opinion that our Lord’s ministry did not last for any longer period than a year and a half, and that it is inconceivable how they could

have formed such an opinion had the passage now spoken of existed at that time in the Gospel of St. John. I do not feel myself called upon to account for all the strange or erroneous sentiments of these ancient doctors. That they did fall into many mistakes is an undoubted fact; and no one can read the earliest of their writings without being struck, and perhaps edified, by remarking the wonderful superiority of the inspired over the uninspired, of the sacred authors of the books of the New Testament over their immediate and most favoured successors. In matters of chronology their errors are so remarkable that I should feel almost inclined to follow the course pursued by Sir Isaac Newton upon the present question, and rejecting their irreconcilable testimonies altogether, attempt to explore a path for myself, without any regard to the statements which they have made, were it not that such a proceeding might be construed into a confession of weakness, and want of dependence upon the truth of the hypothesis which I defend. In contradiction therefore to the preceding assertion, I would say that, with the exception of Clement of Alexandria and Valentinus, there is not one of the Fathers within the specified period who has positively asserted that our Lord's ministry was of so short a duration as one year and a half. For a proof of the truth of this assertion I refer to the following observations:

Tertullian has been produced as one of those who directly favour the opinion of only two Passovers, and a space of one year and a few months in our Saviour's ministry. Speaking of the reign of Tiberius he says,²—"Hujus quintodecimo anno imperii, passus est Christus, annos habens quasi triginta, quum pateretur." Now the expression "annos habens quasi triginta" refers to the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, and seems an exact translation from the phrase of St. Luke ὥσεί ἐτῶν τριάκοντα, which refers to the time of his baptism. The same may be said of "hujus quinto decimo anno imperii," when compared with ἐν ἔτει πέντε καὶ δεκάτῳ τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου, and hence it is inferred that "Tertullian supposed that Christ's ministry did not exceed one year," because otherwise it would have been impossible for him to have imagined that Jesus was only about thirty years old when he suffered, or that he suffered in the fifteenth of Tiberius. I wonder that those who have insisted upon this argument should never have perceived that, if it proves any thing, it proves too much, and that it is equally inconsistent with the idea of two and of three Passovers. From St. Luke we learn that Jesus was not baptized until after the commencement of the fifteenth year of Tiberius, and that he was then "about thirty

² Adv. Jud. lib. viii. p. 141.

years of age." Tertullian asserts that he was crucified *in* the fifteenth year of Tiberius, and was then also "about thirty years of age." If both these statements be correct, and if the fifteenth year of Tiberius be the same in both, it is undeniable that our Saviour was both baptized and crucified in the same year, and consequently his ministry did not continue above a few months. Instead of two, therefore, we have only one Pass-over in that ministry. In order therefore to reconcile the Gospel of St. John with Tertullian, as thus interpreted, we must not only reject the Pass-over alluded to in John vi. 4, but also that of which we have so full and interesting an account in John ii.—a Passover at which the presence and important transactions of Jesus are fully recorded. But whatever be the authority of Tertullian, and in matters of chronology and history it is not held very high, I should not feel authorized in rejecting any part of the Gospel of St. John in mere deference to his implied opinion. But is this his opinion? Is the inference which is drawn from his words correct? Is it necessary, is it in fact consistent with his declarations in other parts of his writings to suppose that he believed our Saviour to have preached only for a few months? I think not. In his treatise against Marcion, Tertullian says expressly "Dominus a 12 Tiberii Cæsaris

revelatus.”^a A little afterwards he observes, “apparuit sub Tiberio,” that is, he appeared or was made known to the world as Christ, from or after the twelfth year of Tiberius Cæsar ; for it is plain Jesus appeared in the world in a private capacity before the reign of Tiberius. Now Jesus was not made known to the world under the character of the Messiah until his baptism, and the commencement of his ministry. It must therefore be to these events that Tertullian alludes when he says “Dominus a 12 Tiberii Cæsaris revelatus.” But we have already seen that in another place he informs us that our Lord was crucified in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. It would therefore appear to have been his opinion that Christ’s ministry lasted about three years.

The manner in which Mann^b has attempted to overturn the preceding conclusion forms one of the most curious instances of sophistry which can be imagined. In the first place he assumes that when Tertullian says “Dominus a 12 Tiberii Cæsaris *revelatus*,” he means by the word “revelatus” the same as “baptizatus et crucifixus.” To

^a Lib. i. cap. 15. p. 624.

^b De annis Christi, p. 160 et 247, “Tertullianus significat istis verbis Dominum tam passum esse, quam revelatum, Tiberii duodecimo,” p. 247. “Tiberii duodecimo ab excessu Augusti computato,” p. 161.

answer this most unwarrantable assertion I have before enquired and shewn to what circumstance in our Saviour's life that word does allude. Mann next proceeds to compare this passage so interpreted with the other in which Tertullian informs us that our Lord suffered in the 15th year of Tiberius, and to reconcile the two, supposes that in the latter he speaks of the fifteenth year of the *proconsular* government of Tiberius, in the former of the twelfth of his *sole* empire, which two years, corresponding in his opinion to each other, give us at once the hypothesis of Tertullian, and the manner of interpretation so as to make the passages agree. But against this we may positively assert, that Tertullian did not mean the fifteenth year of the proconsular government of Tiberius, and what is more, that Mann must have known that this was not his meaning. He quotes the passage from Tertullian in the following manner: "—— Successit Tiberius Cæsar —— hujus quinto decimo anno," &c. The hiatus occurring before "successit" and after "Cæsar" indicates the omission of some words in those portions of the sentence; and it so happens, that those very words, if quoted, would have proved to demonstration that the writer was speaking of the 15th year of the sole, and not of the proconsular empire of Tiberius. The whole paragraph runs thus,—“Post Augustum, qui supervixit post nativitatem Christi, anni

15 efficiuntur. Cui successit Tiberius Cæsar et imperium habuit annis 22, mensibus septem, diebus viginti. Hujus quinto decimo anno," &c. Tiberius reigned twenty-two years, seven months, and twenty days after the death of Augustus. From the death of Augustus, therefore, alone can that reign of Tiberius be computed, in the fifteenth year of which Christ, according to Tertullian, was crucified. This is still more evident from what he afterwards says,—Quæ passio—perfecta est sub Tiberio Cæsare, Coss. Rubellio Gemino et Rufio Gemino, mense Martio," &c. Now the Gemini were consuls in the 15th year of the *sole* empire of Tiberius. It therefore appears that Tertullian conceived our Saviour to have commenced his preaching from the twelfth, and to have suffered death at the Passover in the fifteenth year of the sole empire of Tiberius, and consequently to have continued his ministry for about the space of three years. To account therefore for his using phrases so very similar to those of ἐν ἔτει πέντε καὶ δεκάτῃ τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου and ὥσπερ ἐτῶν τριάκοντα in St. Luke, we must suppose that he considered these expressions of the Evangelist to refer rather to the death than the baptism of Jesus, an interpretation which, however unwarranted and improper, has not been without its defenders in almost every age of the Church.

Before I quit Tertullian let me just notice another error with regard to his opinions. Jerome in his commentary on the ninth chapter of Daniel speaks of him as having believed that our Saviour was crucified in the thirty-third year of his age. That this is incorrect is plain. Tertullian says, Jesus was born fifteen years before the death of Augustus, and suffered in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, whence it is clear that he did not consider him to have completed his thirtieth year at the time of his crucifixion.

In thus settling the opinion of Tertullian we have disposed of the testimony of a variety of the other Fathers, whose writings have been produced on the same side. Africanus, Jerom, Augustin, Sulpicius Severus, Lactantius, and the rest have merely asserted that our Saviour was crucified in the consulship of the Gemini, or the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Of the duration of his ministry they have said nothing, and if, as we seem to have proved in the case of Tertullian, it was possible to maintain this opinion regarding our Lord's death, without limiting the interval between it and his baptism to so short a space as one year, their testimony must at least be considered as neutral, until some other passage can be produced from their works in which their sentiments upon that point are more explicitly contained. Origen there-

fore is the only writer who still remains to be considered.

In two places of his works Origen undoubtedly mentions a *one* year's ministry of our Saviour, but not with equal confidence in both passages. In the first,^c he speaks of it as his own opinion that our Lord *ἐνιαυτὸν γὰρ πον καὶ μῆνας ὀλίγους ἐδίδαξε*; but in the other he is not so positive, and rather alludes to the opinion as contended for by others than entertained by himself.—“*Aiunt uno anno Salvatorem in Judæâ Evangelium prædicasse, et hoc esse quod dicitur prædicare annum Domini acceptum et diem retributionis.*”^d Were these the only remarks upon the subject in the works of Origen, they would be decisive enough of his sentiments. But he was not always uniform or consistent in his ideas, and we therefore find two other passages in which he declares unequivocally for a two year's ministry and three Passovers. The former of these passages is in the Latin translation of his work upon St. Matthew—“*Circa quadragesimum annum a quinto decimo anno Tiberii Cæsaris facta est destructio Hierusalem et templi quod fuit in eâ....Deduc ergo prædicationis Domini fere annos tres.*”^e The second is quite as explicit, and

^c De Principiis, lib. iv. sect. 5.

^d Hom. 32 in Luc.

^e Tract 35. See Whiston Testim. of Phlegon vindic. p. 10.

may be found incidentally introduced as a sort of admitted fact in his answer to Celsus:—'Ο δὲ Ἰούδας παρὰ τῷ Ἰησοῦ οὐδὲ τρία διέτριψεν ἔτη.^f Mann's^g observations upon this are totally unworthy of refutation. He maintains that Origen, by saying not quite *three* years, meant not quite *two* years. In short it suited his purpose to give this explanation. Taking Origen however in his obvious sense, it must at least be allowed that, in different works and at different periods of his life, he was divided against himself. This would at any rate neutralize his evidence. But when we consider that his work against Celsus is his most celebrated

^f Lib. ii. p. 67. edit. Spenceri.

^g De annis Christi, p. 162, “'Ο δὲ Ἰούδας παρὰ τῷ Ἰησοῦ οὐδὲ τρία διέτριψεν ἔτη. Judas verò apud Jesum ne tres quidem annos versatus est, id est, biennii quidem majorem partem, seu plus anno exegit, anni verò tertii partem prorsus nullam attigit. Sed *ne duos quidem annos* noluit dicere, quum ultra annum duos tresve menses inter baptismum et initium docendi effluxisse crederet; cavillari enim visus esset, si contra morem tunc receptum partis anni excurrentis rationem nullam habuisset.” Is it not a little singular that Priestley, who was so obstinate in disbelieving many things, should betray such an easy credulity of disposition upon this point, and, admitting without hesitation the unsatisfactory remarks of Mann (whose characteristic modesty and ingenuity he extols) rank both Tertullian and Origen amongst the patrons of a one year's ministry? There certainly is more ingenuity than modesty in these criticisms of Mann, and I cannot wonder that, with such flagrant perversions of words before their eyes, he should have “absolutely staggered and offended the whole Christian world,” and that Priestley “never heard of so much as one single person having embraced his opinion.”

and judicious production, and that both it and the commentaries upon St. Matthew were composed some time after the work “De Principiis” and the Homilies upon St. Luke, we may perhaps be induced to think that he renounced the opinion of a one year’s ministry, as founded only upon a mystical interpretation of a prophecy of Isaiah, and embraced upon maturer deliberation the hypothesis of three Passovers, and two years and a half. This will appear still more probable if we investigate the false grounds upon which Clemens of Alexandria, the master of Origen and the person from whom he most probably borrowed his early notions, built the propriety of reducing our Saviour’s ministry within such narrow limits.

Καὶ ὅτι ἐνιαυτὸν μόνον ἔδει αὐτὸν κηρύξαι καὶ τοῦτο γέγραπται οὕτως. Ἐνιαυτὸν δεκτὸν κυρίου κηρύξαι ἀπέστειλέ με, τοῦτο καὶ ὁ Προφήτης εἶπε καὶ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον.^h We have here not only the opinion of Clemens, but also his reasons for it. He believed that Jesus preached but for a single year, “because so say the prophet and the gospel.” The order in which he places the two, and the prominent effect which he gives to the prediction, too plainly shew that this was the proof upon which he principally relied. Now before the time of

^h Clem. Al. Strom. lib; i. p. 340.

Clemens the Valentinians had professed the same opinion, and been led to it by the same reasoning : λέγουσι (says Irenæus) ὅτι τῷ δωδεκάτῳ μῆνι ἔπαθεν (Ἰησοῦς) ἐνιαυτῷ γὰρ ἐνὶ βούλονται αὐτὸν μετὰ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ κεκηρυκέναι.¹ He repeats this a second^k and a third time;^l adding in this last place the foundation upon which they built their hypothesis. — “ Duodecimo autem mense dicunt cum passum, ut sit anno uno post baptismum prædicans, et ex prophetâ tentant hoc ipsum confirmare. Scriptum est enim, *Vocare annum Domini acceptum et diem retributionis.*” From this we perceive that Clemens copied both the error and the argument of the Valentinians, so that we have only to refute their notions, and his will fall to the ground at the same time.

Now from the forced inference by which the Valentinians attempted to bolster up their opinion in apparent conformity with a passage of Scripture, it is pretty evident that the duration of our Saviour's ministry for only a single year was not supported by any general tradition and belief of the Christian Church, but was a mere invention of their own. Had there been any such tradition, they would not have failed to produce it as their leading argument. Had there been any such

¹ Adv. Hær. lib. i. p. 16.

^k Lib. ii. cap. 36.

^l Lib. ii. cap. 38.

tradition, Irenæus would not have failed to have admitted the fact, and reasoned only against their interpretation of Isaiah ; for throughout his exposition of their errors, one of his principal grounds of objection is the direct opposition in which the creed of these heretics stood to the creed of all other churches in the world. This is more particularly the case in his second book ; and throughout the whole of his writings he evinces a laudable degree of deference to general and long received opinions. I do not therefore think that he would have opposed the idea of the Valentinians at all had he known it to be generally believed, or have ventured upon any reasonings and conjectures of his own upon the subject, as he proceeds to do, had he been aware of any commonly received opinion. Hence I conceive that in the days of Irenæus the church was in as great a state of uncertainty upon the duration of our Lord's ministry as at this moment, and that the Valentinians were originally led into their error by their own allegorical interpretations of Scripture. The fact is indeed directly asserted by Irenæus,—“ *Illi autem, ut figmentum suum de eo quod est Scriptum vocare annum Domini acceptum affirmant, dicunt uno anno eum prædicasse et duodecimo mense passum.*”^m We have only therefore to

^m Iren. adv. Hær. lib. ii. cap. 39. Priestley supposes (Obs.

shew that the passage quoted from Isaiah, as a prediction of a one year's ministry of Christ, is totally irrelevant, and the hypothesis itself will be no longer entitled to any kind of attention beyond the conjecture of any other individuals. Yet really even this seems unnecessary. In the present advanced state of expository theology it is needless to enter into any elaborate investigation of the words of Isaiah, to prove that the mystical interpretation of the Valentinians is inadmissible. I shall content myself with merely subjoining the explanation of Irenæus, "*Dies retributionis dictus est in quâ retribuit Dominus unicuique secundum opera sua, hoc est, iudicium. Annus autem Domini acceptabilis, tempus hoc in quo vocantur ab eo hi qui credunt ei et acceptabiles fiunt Deo. . . . Ita . . . illic annus non qui est ex duodecim mensibus, sed omne fidei tempus in quo audientes prædicationem credunt homines, et acceptabiles Domino fiunt, qui se ei copulant.*"ⁿ Thus have we traced the opinion of Clemens Alexandrinus to the Valentinians, and found the fanciful foundation

on Harm. p. 44) that the opinion of the Valentinians with regard to the duration of our Saviour's ministry gave rise to their allegorical interpretation of Isaiah, and not, as is generally imagined, that their opinion originated in that interpretation. With how much reason this fancy of his can be maintained, the passage which I have here quoted from Irenæus sufficiently proves.

ⁿ Adv. Hær. lib. ii. cap. 38.

of their opinion to be so utterly unsound, that it is astonishing how Priestley^o could condescend to repeat it as any proof of a one year's ministry of Christ. We have also proved that none of the ancient Fathers, except Clemens, were decidedly of this opinion. Tertullian is against it—Origen is divided against himself—and in the rest there is nothing positive or tangible. Their evidence, therefore, cannot fairly be produced against the genuineness of St. John vi. 4.

6. I have reserved to the last the consideration of what may appear to be the strongest argument for the rejection of the verse in question. Irenæus reckons three Passovers in the Gospel of St. John ; but in his enumeration of them he entirely omits John chap. vi. ver. 4, and substitutes in its stead the feast mentioned John v. 1. Hence it is concluded that^p he had not seen any copy of the Gospel of John that contained the word *πάσχα* in the fourth verse of the sixth chapter." "For his purpose was to collect *all* the passages in the Gospel of John, where he imagined that a Passover was either intended or expressed, and therefore if he had seen that verse, or read it, as we now read it, he would have preferred it, without any hesitation,

^o Observ. on Harm. p. 41.

^p Priestley's Observ. on Harm. chap. vii. p. 46.

to the feast mentioned in chap. v.' This conclusion, even if certain, would not be completely decisive, because the copy from which Irenæus quoted might in fact itself be in error, and might with some degree of fairness have been argued to be so, from the circumstance of its being contradicted by so many other authorities. The inference however itself is not absolutely necessary or sure. Epiphanius positively asserts that our Saviour preached for more than two years, and says that, at the first feast at which he was present after his baptism, *Ἐν μέσῳ τῆς ἑορτῆς ἐκέκραγε, λέγων εἴ τις διψᾷ ἐρχέσθω πρὸς με καὶ πινέτω*. Now when we turn to St. John we find this invitation to have been uttered at that feast of Tabernacles, which immediately preceded the crucifixion, and therefore in the second and not in the first year of our Saviour's ministry, as Epiphanius would intimate.⁹ To what then are we to attribute this variation? To some variation in the copy which Epiphanius used, or to his own mistake? If we follow the

⁹ Τὸν γὰρ πρῶτον ἐνιαυτὸν μετὰ τὸ Βαπτισθῆναι ἀνέβη δηλονότι εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῆς ἑορτῆς, κ. τ. λ. Epiph. Hær. 51. cap. xxv. p. 447. The words of St. John are not ἐν μέσῳ τῆς ἑορτῆς, but ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ μεγάλῃ τῆς ἑορτῆς, cap. vii. 27. which is another proof of Epiphanius having quoted from memory, a practice certainly not uncommon in the present day, and most probably equally prevalent among the older writers, when copies of the Scriptures were much more scarce.

steps of those who have framed the argument from Irenæus, we shall say the former; for it was evidently of great importance to him to make out his opinion clearly and distinctly, and therefore, as they would say, had he known of those passages in St. John which now exist, and read them in the order in which we read them, he would never have made use of such a false statement, when one both true and in his favour was ready to his hand. But I apprehend that a much more natural method of accounting for the variation in both places is by attributing it to the error of the writers,—an error arising either from their quoting by memory, or from an actual misunderstanding of the Evangelist. Perhaps Irenæus, perceiving and not being able to account for the silence of St. John with regard to the presence or any transactions of our Saviour at the Passover mentioned chap. vi. ver. 4, conjectured that this Passover was the feast mentioned chap. v. 1, at which our Saviour *was* present, and performed one of his most memorable miracles, and in consequence explained the word ἐγγύς in the phrase ἦν δὲ ἐγγύς τὸ πάσχα of the nearness of that Passover which was past, instead of one which was future. This interpretation I admit to be forced, and false, and inadmissible, but still I do not think it impossible for Irenæus to have adopted it, when we recollect that it was not (as Priestley asserts) his object “to

collect all the passages in the Gospel of John where he imagined that a Passover was either intended or expressed," but only "*quoties secundum tempus Paschæ Dominus post Baptisma ascenderit in Hierusalem,*"[†] that is, at how many Passovers he was present in Jerusalem. We should consider also that in the very next chapter Irenæus has fallen into blunders equally inconceivable, and imagined our Saviour to have been nearly fifty years old, because the Jews said unto him—"Thou art not yet fifty years old." The opinion of an author who could acquiesce in such an interpretation, and thus fortify himself in the belief of a twenty year's ministry of our Saviour, is not much to be relied on. Yet such was the case with Irenæus. He contends indeed against the Valentinians, that St. John has mentioned three Passovers, and that consequently our Lord's ministry lasted at least for two years and a half: but he also maintains, and apparently as his own sentiment, that our Saviour, beginning his ministry when about thirty, did not end it by his death till he was about fifty years of age, that is, till he had preached nearly twenty years, but whether constantly or at intervals he does not positively state; he would rather seem to imply the latter. He must therefore, as I conceive, have interpreted

[†] Abp. Newcome's Notes to Harm. p. 27.

some expressions of St. John* with great latitude, and supposed that he omitted many Passovers, as well as many acts of Jesus. But be this as it may, such was his hypothesis, and, what is still more singular and opposed to the declarations of every other Christian writer, he asserts that it was an Apostolic and almost universal tradition in the church. The passage which contains this curious assertion has been fortunately in part preserved in its original Greek, and is certainly worthy of a perusal,—*Πάντες οἱ πρεσβύτεροι μαρτυροῦσιν, οἱ κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν Ἰωάννη τῷ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθήτῃ συμβεβληκότες, παραδεδωκέναι ταῦτα τὸν Ἰωάννην. παρέμεινε γὰρ αὐτοῖς μέχρι τῶν Τραϊάνου χρόνων.* “*Quidam autem eorum non solum Joannem, sed et alios Apostolos, viderunt et hæc eadem ab ipsis audierunt, et testantur de hujusmodi relatione.*”¹ What are we to say, or what judgment to pass upon this? It has often been the occasion of much doubt and perplexity to my mind. If we believe his statement, it confounds and overturns the calculations and theories of every age and every nation of Chris-

* “There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” chap. xxi. 25. This is no doubt an hyperbolical expression, but it is an expression which of itself would lead us to suppose our Saviour’s ministry was at any rate longer than a year.

¹ Adv. Hær. lib. ii. cap. 39. The latter part exists only in the Latin translation.

nians under heaven, and is also absolutely contradicted by the first three Evangelists, who all confine the duration of our Saviour's ministry within ten years instead of twenty by informing us that he was both baptized and crucified under the government of Pontius Pilate, who only remained ten years in Judea. If we reject it, it casts a reflection upon the understanding or the credibility of Irenæus, which I should be extremely unwilling to admit, and which is not justified by any similar instances in any other part of his writings. Perhaps the truest and most lenient conclusion we can draw is, to say that he was borne away by his zeal against the Valentinians, and ventured for once upon one of those unwarrantable assertions which are sometimes hazarded in the heat of controversy, and of which we have, even in the present enquiry, produced some glaring examples from Allix and from Mann in a later and more enlightened age.

I have now made all the observations which seem to me necessary upon this subject, and the conclusion I would draw is this—that there is very little reason to suppose that the feast in St. John, chap. v. 1, is to be considered as a Passover—no sufficient argument or authority for rejecting the Passover mentioned by him in chap. vi. 4—and no intimation or foundation whatever

in his Gospel to induce us to imagine that he omitted to record any of the Passovers which occurred in our Saviour's ministry. It therefore follows that as he has enumerated, as his Gospel now stands, only three Passovers, the *most probable* opinion is that which assigns to our Saviour's ministry a duration of two years and a half.



SECTION II.

Probable Year of our Saviour's Crucifixion.

IF there be any force in those arguments by which we have endeavoured to shew that our Saviour was baptized in the month of November J. P. 4739, and any truth in the opinion we have expressed relative to the duration of his ministry, it is evident that, as according to that opinion he was crucified at the third Passover after his baptism, he was crucified at the Passover J. P. 4742. Now this conclusion has the peculiar advantage of corresponding with the most ancient and uniform tradition which exists upon the subject in the Church; for it fixes the death of our Lord to the consulship of the Gemini at Rome, and the fifteenth year of the sole empire of Tiberius, which is the date assigned to this event by every one of the Fathers of the first three centuries, who have made any mention at all of the

period at which it occurred. In most other cases we have to estimate and compare the value of contending conclusions, sometimes built upon the same and sometimes upon different premises; but in the present instance, whoever has said any thing, has said the same thing, and the date stands uncontradicted by any existing Christian writer for more than three hundred years. Many of them indeed have been entirely silent about the year of the crucifixion, but no one who has spoken has differed from the statement of his brethren. Whether with Clement of Alexandria and the Valentinians they limited the duration of our Lord's ministry to a single year, or with Origen seemed to be of a doubtful judgment, or with Tertullian dated the commencement of his ministry from the twelfth of Tiberius, they yet all (with the exception of some Basilidians, who deferred it to the sixteenth)^a fixed the death of our Saviour to the fifteenth of that Emperor's reign. A few of the testimonies which bear out this assertion I will now produce.

Clemens of Alexandria,^b after observing that Jesus when baptized was about thirty years of age and that the word of the Lord came to John

^a Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. i. p. 408.

^b Ubi supra.

in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, and that our Saviour preached not more than one year, adds the following words: Πεντεκαιδεκάτῳ οὖν ἔτει Τιβερίου καὶ πεντεκαιδεκάτῳ Ἀυγούστου, οὕτω πληροῦνται τὰ τριάκοντα ἔτη ἕως οὗ ἔπαθεν. Ἀφ' οὗ δὲ ἔπαθεν (ὁ Ἰησοῦς) ἕως τῆς καταστροφῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ γίνονται ἔτη μβ. μῆνες γ. From the former part of this passage it is quite plain that Clemens did not conceive our Saviour to have suffered before the commencement of the fifteenth year of Tiberius: he must therefore have been mistaken when he says, that from the date of our Saviour's crucifixion to the destruction of Jerusalem there elapsed a period of *forty-two* years and three months. Sept. J. P. 4783 (the date of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus) — 42 years and 3 months = June J. P. 4741; which in point of years corresponds to the latter part of the *fourteenth* instead of the fifteenth of Tiberius, and in point of months cannot be made to correspond to the Passover of the Jews and the crucifixion of our Saviour in any year. To account for this difference we may suppose that Clemens computed the full and final καταστροφὴ of Jerusalem from the year subsequent to its being taken by Titus, that is, from J. P. 4784, in which Vespasian and his son enjoyed the honours of their triumph, and Cæsarea became the metropolis of Judea, which gave the last blow to the greatness and glory of the city of David. This will render

his computation more exact, as also that of Origen, who here and probably in many other instances seems closely to have adhered to the opinions of his master Clemens.

The sentiments of Origen with regard to the year of our Saviour's crucifixion will appear very plainly from a comparison of the two following passages :

Ἀπὸ πέντεκαιδεκάτου ἔτους Τιβερίου Καίσαρος ἐπὶ τὴν κατασκαφὴν ναοῦ τεσσαράκοντα καὶ δύο πεπλήρωται ἔτη.

Τεσσαράκοντα γὰρ ἔτη καὶ δύο οἶμαι ἀφ' οὗ ἐσταύρωσαν τὸν Ἰησοῦν γεγονέναι ἐπὶ τὴν Ἱεροσολύμων καθαίρεσιν.^c

By thus placing the same number of years between the destruction of Jerusalem and the fifteenth of Tiberius, and between the destruction of Jerusalem and the death of our Saviour, it is clear that the fifteenth of Tiberius was the year to which he as well as Clemens referred the date of the crucifixion.

That the same opinion was held by Tertullian the passages already quoted from his writings are a sufficient proof; and for the sentiments of Afri-

^c Hom. xiv. in Jerem. p. 140.

canus to the same purpose we may rest satisfied with the testimony of Jerome :—“ Julius Africanus in quinto temporum, *Atque exinde usque ad annum quintum-decimum Tiberii Cæsaris, quando passus est Christus, numerantur anni sexaginta.*”^d

Lastly, we find the same date assigned to our Saviour’s death by Lactantius : “ Ab eo tempore quo Zacharias fuit usque ad annum quintum-decimum imperii Tiberii Cæsaris, quo Christus crucifixus est, anni quingenti numerantur siquidem Darii, &c.”^e

Such were the general sentiments of the Christian Church during the first three centuries ; and it was not until the fourth century that any new idea was promulgated. Eusebius, conceiving that our Lord was baptized in the fifteenth year of the sole empire of Tiberius, and that his ministry lasted about three years and a half, very naturally transferred the Passover of the crucifixion to the eighteenth or nineteenth year of that Emperor’s reign. The foundations of this new date I have already endeavoured to prove to be defective ; and I therefore think that, considering their weak and unsatisfactory nature, we cannot

^d Hieron. Comment. in cap. iv. Danielis.

^e Lactant. Instit. lib. iv. cap. 14.

be deemed presumptuous in regarding the tradition, which fixes the passion of our Saviour to the fifteenth year of Tiberius, as containing the most probable hypothesis, not only on account of its extreme antiquity and respectable patrons, but also because it agrees most exactly with those opinions relative to the baptism and ministry of our Lord which have already appeared most worthy of our adoption.



SECTION III.

*The probable Month and Day of our Saviour's
Crucifixion.*

FROM the arguments and authorities produced in the preceding Section we might safely conclude that the fifteenth year of the sole empire of Tiberius, and the 4742d of the Julian Period, was not only the most probable, but the certain year of our Lord's crucifixion, were it not for some difficulties which arise from the consideration of the month and the day on which he suffered.

It is plain, in the first place, from the narrations of the Evangelists that our Saviour was crucified on a Friday. He was nailed to the cross about the sixth Jewish hour, or about twelve o'clock. He expired on the cross about the ninth Jewish hour, or about three o'clock in the afternoon, and that on the Friday afternoon. For, after he had expired, "when the even was come, because *it was* the preparation, that is *the day before a sabbath*,

Joseph of Arimathea went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.”^a This is sufficiently distinct; but to shew that this sabbath was the Saturday or seventh day of the week, and not any of the great festivals which were also called sabbaths, we may just add another quotation from the same Evangelist: “When the sabbath was past very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they (Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome) came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”^b From these passages we clearly perceive that our Lord was crucified on the Friday, the day before the Jewish sabbath, and rose again on Sunday, the first day of the week. This is indeed so universally allowed, that it would have been needless to dwell upon it, except for its importance, when viewed in connection with another fact.

For it is also demonstrable, in the second place, that our Saviour was crucified on the 15th day of the Jewish month Nisan. This proposition is not so generally received as the former one, but yet may be satisfactorily proved.

It is well-known that a controversy, originating in the supposed meaning of certain expressions of

^a Mark xv. 43.

^b Mark xvi. 1, 2.

the Evangelist St. John, has long been agitated relative to the question, whether our Saviour celebrated the Passover on the same day with the rest of the Jews or not; and many of the writers who have treated of the chronology of the life of Christ have thought themselves bound to enter at large into the subject. I shall not follow their example beyond a certain extent. It is universally admitted in the western churches (by the Greeks it is denied) that, if there was any difference between our Saviour and the Jews upon this point, the error lay not on the part of Jesus himself, but of those who differed from him. His character, his conduct, his sentiments, will not permit us for a moment to believe that he disobeyed in the slightest degree the ordinances of the Mosaic law, in deference to any traditions which existed amongst the Scribes and Pharisees. If he refused to follow upon this occasion the practice of the High Priests and others amongst the Jews, his refusal must be referred to some deviation in their practice from that which had been formerly prescribed to their forefathers by God. Our Lord was right and they were wrong. This being admitted, it follows that the determination of the controversy before mentioned is of no importance as to the determination of the day on which our Saviour celebrated the Passover and suffered. Whatever rules might have been introduced by

time and tradition amongst the Jewish Priests, and by whatever fanciful notions they might be guided in changing the day of the celebration of the Passover, these rules and notions would not affect the practice of our Lord. It is still to be maintained that he eat the Passover on the day appointed by the law of Moses,—“the day when the Passover *ought* to be killed,” ἐν ᾗ ἔδει θύεσθαι τὸ πάσχα, as it is expressly stated in the Gospel of St. Luke.^c The Pharisees might defer, but our Lord would not anticipate the legal and proper day for the celebration of the Paschal feast. We have only therefore to examine the law of Moses, and observe what month and what day he prescribes for the celebration of the Passover, and then it will necessarily follow, that on that day our Saviour eat the Paschal lamb with his disciples, and on the following morning was himself crucified as the great Passover of the world.

There is no doubt whatever entertained as to the *month* in which the celebration of the Passover was enjoined to the Jews. It was in the first month, the month Nisan or Abib, as it is styled in Exodus,^d which corresponds to the months of March and April in the Christian year. Nor is there much more difficulty with regard to the

^c Chap. xxii. 7.

^d Chap. xiii. 4.

day on which ‘the Passover ought to be killed.’
 “In the fourteenth day of the first month, at even
 is the Lord’s Passover.”^e “The whole assembly
 of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the
 evening.”^f Our Saviour therefore, having eaten
 the Paschal lamb with his disciples on “the day
 when the Passover ought to be killed,” eat it of
 course on the evening after the fourteenth, and
 was crucified on the following day, that is the
 fifteenth day of the Jewish month Nisan.

Had it not been for the doubt and obscurity
 which the “too much learning” of some chrono-
 logers and theologians have thrown upon the pre-
 ceding facts, I should not have deemed it neces-
 sary to insist upon them. It was expedient
 however to combine them, and to prove that
 our Lord, having been crucified both on the
 fifteenth day of the Jewish month Nisan and
 on a Friday, could not have been crucified in
 any year in which the fifteenth of Nisan did
 not fall upon a Friday. The only circumstance
 then with which we are at present concerned is,
 whether the fifteenth day of Nisan fell upon a
 Friday in the year J. P. 4742. Those who ac-
 quiesce in the opinion of Eusebius and of four
 Passovers in our Saviour’s ministry maintain the

^e Levit. xxiii. 5.

^f Exod. xii. 6.

negative. The Jewish months they observe were Lunar months, beginning always with the new Moon, and consequently assigning the full Moon to the night of the fifteenth day of each month. Now they say, that according to the Jewish mode of computation, the Paschal full Moon, or the first full Moon *after* the vernal equinox, did not fall upon a Friday in the year J. P. 4742; consequently neither did the fifteenth of the Jewish month Nisan fall upon that day in that year. The only year within the period to which the death of our Lord can be properly attributed, and in which in their opinion the Paschal full Moon fell upon a Friday, is the year J. P. 4746. In that year it fell upon Friday the third day of April: therefore they conclude that the year J. P. 4746, and not J. P. 4742, is the most probable year of the crucifixion of Jesus.

In the formation of this argument it is evidently taken for granted, 1st, that the vernal equinox always preceded the fifteenth day of Nisan, 2dly, that we are perfectly acquainted with the Jewish method of computation, and 3dly, that this method was in itself so accurate that the precision of modern astronomy may be made use of and depended upon in determining its results.

The investigations of chronologers upon each

of these propositions have been so laborious, and intricate, and profound, that to place before the reader even the substance of their hypotheses, founded as they are upon the most different and contradictory premises, and leading often to the most different and contradictory conclusions, would carry me far beyond the bounds of moderation, and might perhaps after all only throw the reader and myself into a labyrinth of difficulty and confusion. I will not attempt it; nor indeed, with the view I have ultimately taken of the subject, do I think it necessary to do so. The greater part of the writers, who have given their attention to the question, have had some peculiar theory of their own to defend as to the Jewish mode of computing their months and years. Whiston maintains that amongst the Jews "each month began the evening next after the new Moon."^g Petavius,^h that they computed from a faulty cycle of their own, which is given in Epiphanius,ⁱ and the elucidation of which has exercised the ingenuity of Scaliger, of Kepler, and himself, without leading to any determinate conclusion. Now as it is my intention in the present section not positively to adopt any one of

^g Short View of Harm. p. 195.

^h Petav. de Doctr. Temp. lib. ii. and xii. and Animadv. in Epiph.

ⁱ Hær. 51.

the multifarious theories which have been hazarded, but to shew generally the uncertainty of all, and the impossibility of trusting to the assertions either of the Rabbinical doctors or Epiphanius, I shall not enter any further into the subject than may seem essential to that purpose. The advantage which I propose to myself by such a mode of proceeding is this : If the uncertainty of every known hypothesis, and of the premises upon which every future hypothesis is to be founded, can be shewn, it will appear possible at least, and when we consider other circumstances, perhaps not very improbable, that the fifteenth day of Nisan might have fallen upon a Friday in J. P. 4742.

I. That the vernal equinox must always have preceded the fifteenth day of Nisan and the Pass-over, has been strenuously maintained from several quotations which contain the sentiments of writers both before and about the period of our Saviour's appearance upon earth, the only time of which it is necessary for us to speak.

The opinion of the Jews upon this subject, *before* the coming of our Lord, is stated in two quotations from the works of the Agathobuli and their scholar Aristobulus, who flourished in the second century before the Christian era. The

passages may be found in the Ecclesiastical history of Eusebius.^k

Φασὶν (οἱ Ἀγαθόβουλοι) δεῖν τὰ διαβατήρια θύειν ἐπίσης ἅπαντας μετὰ ἰσημερίαν ἑαρινήν.

Ὁ δὲ Ἀριστόβουλος προστίθισιν ὡς εἴη ἐξανάγκης τῇ τῶν διαβατηρίων ἑορτῇ μὴ μόνον τὸν ἥλιον τὸ ἰσημερινὸν διαπορεύεσθαι τμήμα, καὶ τὴν σελήνην δέ.

Οἶδα (concludes Eusebius) πλεῖστα καὶ ἄλλα πρὸς αὐτῶν λεγόμενα. . . . δι' ὧν παριστάνειν πειρῶνται τὴν τοῦ πάσχα καὶ τῶν ἁζύμων ἑορτὴν δεῖν πάντως μετ' ἰσημερίαν ἄγεσθαι.

The following are produced as traces of the prevalence of a similar rule from authors about or subsequent to the commencement of the Christian era.

Τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ἑαρινῆς ἰσημερίας πρῶτον ἀναγράφει μῆνα Μωϋσής.^l

Τῷ δὲ μῆνι τῷ Ξανθικῷ, ὃς Νίσσαν παρ' ἡμῖν καλεῖται καὶ τοῦ ἔτους ἔστιν ἀρχή, τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτῃ κατὰ σελήνην, ἐν Κριῷ τοῦ Ἡλίου καθεστῶτος, . . . τὴν Θυσίαν

^k Lib. vii. cap. 32. p. 369-70.

^l Philo Jud. in Vita Moysis.

... Πάσχα λεγομένην, δι' ἑτους ἐκάστου θύειν ἐνόμισε.^m

The rule is confirmed by Maimonidesⁿ who maintains that the Jews intercalated a month, whenever, without that intercalation, the vernal equinox would have fallen either on or before the sixteenth day of Nisan.

The passages quoted above from Philo and Josephus are by no means so positive or distinct as those from the Agathobuli and Aristobulus. The former seem rather to prescribe the celebration of the Passover about the period of the vernal equinox, whereas the latter absolutely confine it to some day after that equinox. It may also be observed that, though Anatolius (for the passage in Eusebius appears to be a quotation from that author) places the Agathobuli and Aristobulus in the second century before Christ, yet the propriety of his opinion has been controverted very boldly by *the commentators*,^o and the antiquity of those

^m Josephi Antiq. lib. iii. cap. 10. p. 93.

ⁿ Petav. de Doctr. Temp. lib. ii. cap. 30. ver. 1. p. 160.

^o “Duos fuisse Agathobulos cognomento doctores, scribit Anatolius. Sed quòd eos Philone et Josepho antiquiores facit vereor ne opinione suâ falsus sit.”

“Aristobulum unum fuisse ex septuaginta senioribus, scribit Anatolius. Id jampridem refutavit Scaliger, &c.” Valesii Notæ in Euseb. ubi supra.

writers, or the genuineness of their writings very strongly called in question. Upon the whole, however, I am inclined to think that it was a rule amongst the Jews about the time of our Saviour that the Passover ought never to precede the day to which their calculations had fixed the vernal equinox. But then it does not necessarily follow from this rule that the Passover never did precede the day of the vernal equinox, as determined by the extreme accuracy of the astronomical observations of modern days, unless it could be shewn that the Jewish mode of ascertaining the equinox was attended with the same degree of accuracy. If the Jewish method of determining the equinox was either uncertain or inaccurate, the preceding rule must itself also have been liable to the same inaccuracy or uncertainty in its practical application. Now we know that there is no injunction in the Mosaic law which made it necessary for the Jews to be anxiously minute with regard to the observation of the equinox, or which indeed required it to be observed at all. The only points to which it was really necessary for them to attend in the appointment of the Passover were—that the Paschal lamb should be slain on the fourteenth day of the first month at even, and that the barley should then be sufficiently ripe for the offering of the first-fruits in the temple on the second day of the feast. Hence as it was not necessary for the

Jews to guard against error upon this subject, neither is it impossible or improbable that they should sometimes have deviated into a slight degree of inaccuracy with regard to the proper period of the vernal equinox. Nay more, there seem to be some hints in Epiphanius of an error of this kind having actually occurred in the very year in which our Saviour was crucified. His language is indeed extremely dark and intricate, yet, according to Petavius, his words, if they have any assignable meaning, would appear to intimate as much.—“Hoc tamen significare videtur, (Epiphanius) Judæos nonnullos, videlicet, Pharissæos ac Scribas, communem hunc errorem emendare cupientes Pascha suum in 20 Martii diem distulisse, quo passus est Christus, *quo nimirum propius ad æquinoctium accederent*, vel etiam cœleste plenilunium. Nam hoc verba ipsa tacitè demonstrant: καὶ ἸΣΗΜΕΡΙΑ πρὸ ἑνδεκα Καλανδῶν Ἀπριλλίων, δι’ ἣν πλανηθέντες ὑπερβᾶσαν μίαν ἡμέραν ἐποίησαν.^p Though therefore the rule would require that the vernal equinox always should have preceded the Passover, it does not seem absolutely certain that it did always so precede it. From some cause or other the rule and the practice would seem sometimes to have been at variance.

^p Petav. Obs. in Epiph. Hær. 51. p. 181

11. In directing our attention to the method of calculating the Jewish months and years we may lay out of our consideration every thing which relates to the remoter periods of the Jewish polity, and confine ourselves to the times which succeeded the captivity of Babylon, and preceded the dispersion of the Jews.⁴

With regard to the practice of the Jews within this limited period we have several testimonies from writers of great weight, which determine their months to have been lunar months, that is, of a duration nearly equal to a synodical revolution of the Moon.

The author of the book of Ecclesiasticus in the forty-third chapter expatiates upon the beauty of the Moon, and the uses derived from her regular revolutions : “ The Lord made the Moon also to

⁴ Much additional confusion has been thrown into this very intricate subject by writers neglecting to mark the period of the Jewish Commonwealth to which their observations apply.—“ Kepler” (says Prideaux, *Com. Pref.* vol. I. p. 14.) “ holds that the Jewish year was a solar year, consisting of twelve months of thirty days each, and an addition of five days after the last of them ; and our countrymen Archbishop Usher and Mr. Lydiat, two of the most eminent chronologers that any age hath produced, go into the same opinion.” Sigonius also (*de Rep. Hebr.*) agrees with them. But then it should be stated, that Kepler confines and the rest ought to have confined the application of their remarks to the times previous to the reign of Alexander the Great.

serve in her season, for a declaration of times, and a sign of the world. From the Moon is the sign of feasts, a light that decreaseth in her perfection. The month is called after her name.”^r After reading these verses it is impossible to doubt but that in the days of this Jewish author, and about the second century before Christ, the months of the Jews were lunar months, in the sense above mentioned.

The same conclusion may be deduced with equal certainty for the century after Christ from the expression *κατὰ σελήνην*, in a passage which has already been quoted from Josephus. The expressions of Philo Judæus also establish the same fact; but as I shall have occasion to refer to them afterwards, I do not think it necessary to produce them on the present occasion.

We have now ascertained that the months of the Jews were lunar months, so far as to be nearly determined in their commencement and duration by the synodical revolutions of the Moon; but in what manner they were measured and dated, whether from the phasis or appearance of an illuminated portion of the Moon’s disk, or by tables in which her mean motion was calculated and

^r Ver. 6, 7, 8.

adapted to the purpose, or by some faulty and inaccurate cycle of their own, or by some other method altogether different from these, is a point upon which the most learned have disputed in every age, and which, I apprehend, can never be settled with any degree of satisfaction from the remaining scanty and inadequate hints which form the only materials for our judgment.

Mr. Mann^s argues very strongly for the antiquity of the astronomical method of computation at present in use amongst the Jews, and contends that it was the method adopted so early as the times of our Saviour.

Epiphanius^t on the other hand broadly asserts that the Jews in our Saviour's time followed the calculations of a faulty and inaccurate lunar cycle, by means of which they anticipated in the year of his crucifixion the proper period for the celebration of the Passover by two days. Petavius defends this opinion, and he and Kepler have both with much labour endeavoured to draw out a set of tables upon the principles which Epiphanius has laid down; but there is so much obscurity and even contradiction in the passage in which that

^s De annis Christi, cap. 20, 21, 22, 23.

^t Hær. 51. cum Animadversionibus Petavii.

Father treats upon the subject, that it would be quite impossible to say whether they are right or wrong in their conclusions.

The Rabbinical Doctors (and Maimonides in particular^a) have referred to a third method and stated that the ancient Jews reckoned the beginning of their months from the phasis of the Moon, and that their present mode of calculation was not introduced until after the final dispersion of the nation. Before that period they assert that there were in Judea several *συνέδρια*, or committees, (as we should term them) under the general superintendence, and, as it were, branches of a central committee fixed at Jerusalem. The members of this committee were in possession of certain tables containing calculations of the motions of the Moon, which being inspected it was thence determined when the new Moon ought and would most probably appear. They then sent out some approved and steady persons to observe whether the Moon

^a Scaliger de Emend. Temp. Lib. 1, and Petavius de Doctr. Temp. Lib. ii. and xii. have both treated at large upon the statements of the Talmudical Doctors, and as usual are at direct variance with each other. Those who wish to understand the subject and judge impartially for themselves, should consult and study "Surenhusii Mischna, Tractatus de Principio anni, vol. II. p. 300 to 354. and still more carefully the treatise of Maimonides "De Consecratione Calendarum, &c." translated into Latin by De Veil, and published in 4to. Lond. 1683.

did appear at the time at which they expected her appearance or not. If these persons beheld the *phasis* on the night after the twenty-ninth of the current month, they immediately proclaimed the new moon: thus determining what would otherwise have been the thirtieth day of the current month to be the first of the succeeding one. If the watchers did not return with intelligence of the observation of the *phasis* before the night after the thirtieth day of the current month, they fixed the commencement of the succeeding month on the following day, making the current month consist of thirty days. In other words, they determined the current month to consist of twenty-nine or thirty days, according as their watchers did or did not return with intelligence of having seen the new Moon before the conclusion of the thirtieth day. After the central committee had thus fixed the day of the new Moon, messengers were sent to the several cities within the distance of a ten day's journey from the metropolis to announce the fact.

Such are the leading points in the statements of Maimonides and the Rabbins, which Scaliger and Petavius have summarily rejected as a gratuitous fiction, and against which others have reasoned with a great degree of probability and force. For myself however I must say, that I

cannot consider them as either altogether true or untrue. There are in the detail of the proceedings of the committee and of the purposes for which those proceedings were instituted a great number of manifest absurdities and inconsistencies, and hence I much doubt whether the object for which they observed the *phasis* has not been misrepresented by these fanciful doctors, as well as many fictitious circumstances added. But on the other hand I can scarce believe the whole story of the committee and the observations of the *phasis* to have been a mere creature of their inventive imaginations. It may therefore deserve our attention to enquire, what was the real purpose of the labours of this committee, and whether its objects and proceedings have not been erroneously stated, and strangely mingled and corrupted by the fictitious additions of the later Rabbins.

That there is much substantial truth in the Rabbinical statement may be fully proved from the pages of Philo, who lived and wrote at the very time of our Saviour's appearance upon earth. He calls the new Moon the beginning of the month (*ἀρχὴ μηνός*) and informs us that the new Moon was determined by the *phasis* or first *perceptible* illumination of the Moon's disk—*Νουμηνία γὰρ ἄρχεται φωτίζειν Αἰσθητῶ φέγγει σιελήνην ἥλιος,*

ἡ δὲ τὸ ἴδιον κάλλος ἀνάφαινει τοῖς ὀρώσι.^v It seems therefore a certain fact, that about the period of our Lord's crucifixion the Jews reckoned the beginning of the month in some sense or other from the phasis of the Moon.

It would appear however from another passage of Philo (and this is all that it is requisite for us to shew) that they did not regulate the celebration of the Passover by the phasis of the new Moon. The Passover he informs us was celebrated in the month Nisan, on the fourteenth day of the month, and *before* the Moon had reached the full. ... περὶ τεσσσερεσκαιδεκάτην ἡμέραν, ΜΕΛΛΟΝΤΟΣ τοῦ σεληνιακοῦ κύκλου γίγνεσθαι πλησιφάους.^w Now if the first day of the month had been reckoned from the first visible illumination of the Moon's disk, the Passover would have been said to have been celebrated a little after and not before the full Moon. It would appear therefore that the first day of the month, in the popular sense, in the month Nisan at least, was not reckoned by the generality of the Jewish nation from the phasis of the new Moon, but by some other method of computation. Indeed there are several considerations which tend in a

^v Philo Jud. de Septen. vol. II. p. 292. editio Mangey.

^w De Mon. lib. iii. vol. II. p. 169.

great measure to destroy the credibility of the principal points of this Rabbinical tradition.

1. There are several glaring inconsistencies and absurdities in the circumstantial part of the whole account,—many things which Mann very justly terms “*absurda simul et supertitiosa*,”^{*} and one of the most prominent is this, that, if the beginning of every month was determined by the phasis of the new Moon of the succeeding month, it would have been impossible to say which was the last day of any month until it was actually past. Whether the current month was to contain twenty-nine or thirty days could never be known till the month had closed. This must have been productive of very great confusion and uncertainty as to dates, even in Jerusalem itself, where the central committee was sitting for the purpose of determining the point, whilst in places at the distance of two or three days’ journey from the metropolis it must have left them in uncertainty

* Some of those absurdities however which Mann produces he would have found to be removed by Maimonides, had he taken the trouble of consulting him. For instance the difficulty which (p. 234) he conceives the cities at a distance from Jerusalem must have felt in knowing when to observe the great day of expiation in the month Tisri is completely obviated by Maimonides, who says that in all these cases the distant cities, in order “to make assurance doubly sure,” observed these festivals on two successive days.

of the real day of the month for several days. Nor is this by any means the whole of the evil; for there were some cases in which, even after a whole month had passed away, the whole reckoning would have to be changed, and a new one commenced. Maimonides^y informs us that, when the phasis of the new Moon had been erroneously fixed to the thirtieth day of the preceding month, that error, even if discovered within a few days, was never rectified; but if the preceding month had been erroneously intercalated, and the phasis fixed to what would otherwise have been the thirty-first day of that month, the intercalary day was rejected, and the preceding month made to consist only of twenty-nine days, if the error was proved any time before the end of the month. He excepts indeed the months of Nisan and Tisri from the operation of this rule, on account of the Passover and the great day of expiation, and conceives that if the error was not rectified before the fourteenth day of Nisan and the ninth of Tisri, it was not in those months rectified at all; but with regard to the other months he affirms it to have always been enforced. To what confusion would not such a rule lead if observed in any month, and how can we possibly suppose that any nation would persevere for centuries, as the Jews are said to have

^y De Consecr. Cal., cap. ii, sect. 10, and cap. iii, sect. 15, 16.

done, in a mode of framing their calendar which must inevitably be attended with the utmost perplexity and confusion.

2. What renders the improbability the stronger in this case is, that if they did act in this manner it was not because they were a rude and illiterate people, and like some barbarians utterly unacquainted with the changes and periods of the Moon. It was not for want of knowledge, because the central committee are reported to have been in possession of certain astronomical tables from which they were able to calculate the true motion of the Moon and very nearly the time of her appearing,—“*Habebant illi lunarium motuum verorum, sive accuratissimorum, tabulas, quibus diligenter inspectis, animadvertabant ecquid luna se suo tempore visendam præberet, hoc est tricesimâ nocte, an nondum sui copiam factura videretur.*”² If really possessed of tables of which the calculations were so nearly accurate, why did not they depend upon them and intercalate a day at intervals, as might seem necessary? Why always leave the first day of the month uncertain, until it was almost past, and not rather adopt some technical method of fixing the duration and commencement of each month, as was the practice with almost every other

² Petav. de Doc. Temp. lib. ii. cap. ii. 7, p. 156.

nation, and as seems also to have been the practice even in the most ancient times ; for Moses, when speaking of the continuance of the flood, makes it to have lasted for five months, and computes the length of each month at exactly thirty days.^a

3. The difficulties already mentioned seem to render it somewhat unlikely that the Jews in general should ever follow such a bungling and uncertain method of determining the beginning and duration of their months ; and that they did not always do so,—that in one instance at least the nation at large did not regulate their reckoning by the day on which the priests proclaimed the phasis of the new Moon is freely admitted by Maimonides himself. When circumstances required that a month should be intercalated, Maimonides says^b that letters were sent to the distant cities and provinces, announcing the intercalation and absolutely fixing the duration of the intercalary month either at twenty-nine or thirty days, to which duration those cities and provinces always adhered. The council at Jerusalem, however, did not settle for themselves and their own practice whether the intercalary month should consist of twenty-nine or thirty days, until the conclusion

^a Gen. chap. vii. and viii. Shuckford's Connection. Preface.

^b De Cons. Calend. cap. iv. §. 17.

of that month and the appearance of the new Moon of the succeeding month Nisan had pointed out which number of days it ought to consist of. Hence it is evident that there might and would sometimes be a difference between the members of the Jerusalem council and the rest of the Jews in their mode of reckoning the first day of the month Nisan. If the council announced to the nation at large an intercalary month of twenty-nine days only, and afterwards found out that they were wrong in their calculations, and that it ought to have consisted of thirty days, it is evident that in that year the persons composing and adhering to the practice of the council would differ from the rest of the Jews in counting the first, and therefore the fifteenth day of Nisan. What was the fifteenth of Nisan to the one, would be the sixteenth to the other; and perhaps some circumstance of this nature, at present unknown to us, may have occasioned the difference, if there really was any difference, amongst the Jews as to the day of the celebration of the Passover in the year of our Lord's crucifixion. Perhaps from this very cause we may explain why, as is supposed by many, our Saviour and his disciples and the generality of the Jews sacrificed the Paschal lamb on the evening of the Thursday, and the Scribes and Pharisees and others not until that of the Friday in Passion week,—in other words, why our Lord

considered the Friday, and others the Saturday, as the fifteenth day of Nisan : but without insisting further upon this, it is plain that the proclamation of the time of the new Moon's appearance did not always determine the Jews in fixing the first day of the month, and more especially that it did not always do so with regard to Nisan. This is sufficient for my purpose,—sufficient to shew, that we are still in such a degree of ignorance with regard to the method of calculating the Jewish months and years, as to prevent our deciding with absolute certainty upon the day on which the Passover took place in the year of our blessed Saviour's crucifixion. As, however, I have already entered somewhat at length into the curious and obscure subject of the Jewish calendar, I would beg leave to be permitted, with great diffidence, to propose a conjecture with regard to what I consider to have been the real object of that superstitious observation of the phasis of the Moon which cannot with any degree of probability be denied to have been uniformly made, and also with regard to the sense in which Philo is to be interpreted when he says, that this phasis or new Moon so determined constituted the beginning of the month. I conceive then, that the first visible appearance of the new Moon constituted the beginning of the month only in an ecclesiastical sense, and for particular purposes of sacrifice, and that

the first day of the month in a civil and popular sense was not computed from that appearance, but, as Epiphanius asserts, from some peculiar cycle of their own; for I perceive no other method by which the account of that Father can possibly be reconciled to the statement of the Talmudical doctors. Further, the purposes for which the new Moon was so strictly watched I conceive may be deduced from the very first page of the treatise of Maimonides, which has been already so frequently quoted. Maimonides in the first place produces the words of Moses, where it is said—"In the beginning of your months ye shall offer a burnt-offering to the Lord,"^c and then adds, that it was a tradition of the elders that when God gave the preceding precept to Moses, he shewed him the appearance of the new Moon, and enjoined that whenever he observed the same he should consecrate it to the Lord by religious services,—by the offering of an additional sacrifice. I deem it to be not impossible, that this tradition may have occasioned the constant observance of the new Moon, and all the care and strictness with which it was watched, and all the rules and scruples with which the testimonies of its appearance were re-

^c Numb. xxviii. 11. "quod sapientes quidam sic interpretati sunt, ut vellent per visum a Deo Lunæ novæ speciem objectam esse Mosi, atque eidem præscriptum, ut cum similem visurus esset eam illicò consecraret." Maimon. de Cons. Calend. cap. i. sect. 1.

ceived and judged, and all the *apparatus* of messengers sent to different cities, which might all have been adopted to prevent the offering of these sacrifices to God before the occurrence of that phenomenon which they conceived he had appointed as a sign for their celebration ; for it is well known to every reader of the New Testament how rigidly the Pharisees adhered to their traditions, sometimes even in direct violation of the moral law of God. I offer this however as a mere conjecture, upon a point which is extremely obscure, and of no material importance either in a moral or religious point of view, and therefore one of those subjects upon which a conjecture may safely be hazarded without unsettling the principles of faith in any mind. It is only indeed in matters of little consequence that men are authorized thus to exercise their ingenuity and imagination. In questions of higher moment they should learn to confess their ignorance and be wisely silent.

III. But to return. From what has been observed we may draw the following conclusions :—1st, that it is not absolutely certain whether the Jewish Passover was always celebrated *before* the vernal equinox :—2dly, that even if it were, Epiphanius and the Talmudists are utterly at variance with regard to the method of computation in use amongst the Jews, in the days of our Sa-

viour, for the regulation of their months and years, and that to neither the one nor the other is so much deference due as to justify our giving a positive determination in favour of either side:— 3dly, that in consequence we may safely say that the Jewish method of fixing the Passover is not by any means so well known at present as to permit us to make use of and depend on the precision of modern Astronomy, in ascertaining the period to which it was fixed in the year of our Saviour's crucifixion. It is therefore at least *possible* that the fifteenth of Nisan might have fallen on a Friday in J. P. 4742. Beyond this possibility it is not absolutely necessary for us to enquire, but as there are several probable suppositions upon which it may also be shewn that the fifteenth of Nisan did fall upon a Friday in that year, I shall now proceed to state them.

1st, If we suppose that the Passover took place *before* the vernal equinox in the year of our Lord's crucifixion, we shall find that the full Moon next *before* the vernal equinox in J. P. 4742, which we have assigned for the death of our Saviour, fell upon the 18th of March, and that it was also a Friday, B being the dominical letter for that year.

2dly, If, determining nothing with respect to

the mode of fixing the Passover, we simply follow the authority of Tertullian, who positively asserts that our Lord was crucified on the 25th of March,^d we shall find here also a strict correspondence with our opinion; for the 25th of March was a Friday in J. P. 4742, and in no other year to which the crucifixion can with any propriety be attributed.

3dly, If we suppose that the Paschal full Moon in the year of our Saviour's crucifixion was the first *after* the vernal equinox, and admit with Epiphanius that the Jews, following in that year the erroneous calculations of their own peculiar and inaccurate cycle, anticipated by two or three days the proper period for the celebration of the Passover, this hypothesis will also agree very well with our opinion that Christ suffered in J. P. 4742. In that year the first full Moon after the vernal equinox took place on the night between the 16th and 17th, the new Moon having occurred on the 2d of April about eight o'clock p. m. This was the *real* period of that new Moon,—the anticipated period therefore, according to the Jewish method of computation as stated by Epiphanius,

^d "Quæ passio.....perfecta est sub Tiberio Cæsare, Coss. Rubellio Gemino et Rufo Gemino, mense Martio, temporibus Paschæ, die 8vo. Calendarum Aprilium, &c."

Tertull. adv. Jud. lib. viii. p. 141.

would fix it about the 31st of March, and we may consequently suppose the first of April to have been the first day of Nisan for that year. The evening of the 14th of April or Nisan would thus be the time at which "the Passover ought to be killed," and of course also the time at which it was killed by our Saviour and his Disciples. On the morning of the next day Jesus was crucified — that is, on the morning of Friday the 15th of April or Nisan, J. P. 4742, the 17th of April being the Sunday in that year.

We have here no less than three probable suppositions, upon any one of which it is evident, that our Saviour, if crucified on the 15th of Nisan J. P. 4742, was crucified on a Friday, and therefore I apprehend that when we reflect upon the many reasonings and testimonies by which we are led to fix upon that year, as the year of our Lord's death, it will easily be allowed that some one of them may be the true hypothesis, and that at any rate there is no incontrovertible objection against the date we have selected to be drawn from the day of the week and Jewish month on which, from the writings of the Evangelists, Christ may be proved to have suffered. Having given this general answer to the objection, I would now beg leave to add a few remarks upon the third mode of solution which I deem the most likely to be correct, and to

state the reasons which induce me to form that opinion.

Whatever may be the faults of Epiphanius, I cannot persuade myself to think so lightly of his veracity as to suppose that he would wilfully have invented the whole account which he has given us of the Jewish cycle, nor so meanly of his judgment as to imagine that there was no foundation whatever for his opinion, that in the year of our Lord's crucifixion the Jews anticipated the proper period of the Paschal feast. There certainly is an insurmountable degree of obscurity and of difficulty in explaining and reconciling his statements,—“*Hæc Epiphaniæ oratione nullum sphingis ænigma perplexius esse puto.*”^c It may be indeed that, as in the second verse of the second chapter of St. Luke, so here also there is some corruption of the text; and I am strongly inclined to agree with Petavius “*ut emendationem potius hic locus quam interpretationem requirat,*” for after all the learned observations of that author I am still much in the dark with regard to the cycles of the Jews. I seem however from all his learning and obscurity to gather two things with tolerable clearness,—first, that it is impossible in the present day, and without more distinct and copious information with regard

^c Petav. Animadv. in Epiph. vol. II. p. 127.

to the method by which the Jews regulated their feasts and determined their new Moons, to say precisely upon what day they celebrated the Passover in any particular year; and, secondly, that they did anticipate the proper day in the year of our Lord's crucifixion. Since therefore it appears that, if in the year J. P. 4742 the Jews celebrated the Paschal feast on the evening of Thursday the 14th of April, they celebrated it before the proper period, according to the Moon, that is one strong reason for supposing it to have been the year of the passion of Christ.

Another reason for supposing J. P. 4742 to have been the year of our Lord's death, and April 14 the day on which he eat the Passover with his disciples, I have already hinted at. It is the facility it affords of removing a great difficulty, with regard to the different days on which in that year some of the Jews appear to have sacrificed and eaten the Paschal lamb. I have with great care examined the arguments produced on both sides in this controversy, and my ultimate conviction is that, whilst the words of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke necessarily compel us to believe that the majority of the Jews sacrificed the Paschal lamb on the *same* day with our Saviour, the expressions of St. John lead us irresistibly to the conclusion, that many of the Scribes and Pha-

risees and other leading characters amongst them did not sacrifice it until the evening of the following day,—until after our Saviour himself had been crucified. Two passages produced from this Evangelist may and perhaps ought to be otherwise interpreted, but a third is, I think, quite conclusive. I allow that the phrase *πρὸ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα*, in chap. xiii. 1. means, that it was the preparation of the Paschal subbath, or that sabbath which occurred in the Paschal week, but no critical distortion appears to me capable of giving to chap. xviii. 28.—*καὶ αὐτοὶ οὐκ εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον, ἵνα μὴ μιναιθῶσιν, ἀλλ' ἵνα φάγωσι τὸ πάσχα*, any other meaning or translation than this,—“And they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Paschal offering”—the sacrifice of the Passover. The word *πάσχα* when alone is not always used exclusively for the Paschal lamb, but often in a more enlarged and extended sense, for the whole feast of unleavened bread; but the phrase, *φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα*, though used by each of the first three Evangelists, and more than once, is never applied except to the eating of the Paschal offering itself, at the time appointed in remembrance of the Lord's Passover in Egypt. The inference therefore from the words of St. John above quoted is, that the Priests and Pharisees did not eat this Passover at the same time with Jesus and

the rest of the Jews ; and I say, that this difference may be accounted for on the supposition that our Lord was crucified J. P. 4742. To understand this we must refer back to the preceding year, and we shall find that the Paschal full Moon took place in J. P. 4741 on the 29th of March. It could not have been the full Moon next before the 29th of March, for that would bring us back to the very beginning of that month, and therefore fix the Passover more than twenty days before the vernal equinox, an error too great to be attributed with any degree of probability to the Jewish method of computation. It could not have been the full Moon next *after* the 29th of March, for then the Passover would have been on the *second* and not the *first* full Moon after the vernal equinox. Hence we perceive that the Passover J. P. 4741, or in other words the 15th of Nisan in that year fell about the 29th of March. Now the year of which that Nisan was the first month either had or had not an intercalary month. If it had not, it consisted only of *twelve* lunar months, and therefore would fix the next Paschal full Moon, and consequently the Passover also, either on or about the 18th of March J. P. 4742. But this as we have seen was *before* the vernal equinox. It is therefore perhaps more probable to suppose that, in order to fix the Passover after this equinox, the Jewish calendar had in this year an intercalary

month, and so transferred the Passover J. P. 4742 to the full Moon next after the 18th of March, that is, to the month of April. This being assumed, we must now recollect what Maimonides has told us about the length of those intercalary months, namely, that their duration was fixed at the time at which they were appointed either to 29 or 30 days, but that if the new Moon did not appear before the conclusion of the 30th day, the priests and those who were with them reckoned an intercalary month of thirty days, even though they had originally determined that it should consist only of twenty-nine. Suppose now that an intercalary month of twenty-nine days had been proclaimed for the year J. P. 4742, and the 1st of the month Nisan fixed by their method of computation to the 1st of April, here it is plain that as the new Moon did not take place until the 2d of April, the priests and others, not being able to see the new Moon on the 1st, would necessarily extend their intercalary month to thirty days (and their months never consisted of more than thirty days) whilst the rest of the nation would still reckon it as consisting only of twenty-nine. Thus Friday the 1st of April would be the 1st of Nisan, and Thursday the 14th of April the 14th of Nisan to the majority of the Jews, whilst to others Saturday the 2d of April would be the 1st of Nisan, and Friday the 15th of April the 14th of Nisan in

J. P. 4742. The bulk of the nation would therefore sacrifice and eat the Paschal lamb on the Thursday with our Saviour, and others not till the Friday evening. This seems to be an explanation of at least a possible cause of this difference and difficulty, and at the same time to give a degree of strength, proportioned to its own probability, to the opinion of our Saviour's crucifixion being rightly dated when dated in April J. P. 4742. There is an argument however against this month, and in favour of March, which ought not to be omitted, and it is this:—The Fathers are not more unanimous and decided in fixing the death of Christ to the 15th of Tiberius, as the year, than they are in determining upon March, as the month. With regard to the day they differ, but upon the month they agree; and this may perhaps weigh with some in giving their opinion for the 18th or 25th of March, rather than the 14th of April, whilst all, I trust, will acknowledge the intricacy and obscurity of the subject, and perceive that no decisive objection can be raised against *any* year, merely from the circumstance of our Saviour's being known to have been crucified on a Friday. Whether he was crucified in J. P. 4742 or J. P. 4746 or any other year, can neither be affirmed or denied merely by our calculations of the Paschal full Moon, because we know not with sufficient accuracy the Jewish

method of determining the Passover ; but must be settled by other considerations, by a comparison of the testimonies of ancient writers with the duration of our Saviour's ministry, and his age at the time of his baptism.



CONCLUSION.

I HAVE now brought these observations to a close, and endeavoured to prove that our blessed Saviour was born into the world in the Spring of J. P. 4709,—baptized in the month of November, J. P. 4739, and crucified at the Passover, J. P. 4742, after a ministry of about two years and a half. To be positive in a matter of such extreme difficulty would ill become any man; I shall therefore only remark, that if I have forgotten or undervalued any objection it is because I was ignorant either of its existence or importance. I have wilfully mis-represented nothing, but endeavoured to lay before the reader every argument connected with my subject in the very light in which it appeared to my own mind. I know not however in what manner I can better explain the views with which I have written and the course which I have pursued, than by adopting the simple and honest words of Le Clerc, who is not only one of the most sensible, but what is of some consequence to the shortness and uncertainty of human life, one of the most concise of all the writers upon the chronology of our Saviour's life.^a

^a Le Clerc's Dissertations suffixed to his Harmony, p. 581.

“I would not have it thought that I have produced nothing but what is new, which would be far from truth, others having before made use of many things here mentioned: but I have selected from the writings of others what seemed necessary for the confirming and illustrating of my design; and these I have set forth with as much brevity and plainness as I was able, and, if I am not mistaken, explained them with some new arguments, by which I have endeavoured more diligently than others have done before me to distinguish those things that were dubious from what was manifest, and of certain authority. So that what I have here advanced is not all my own, neither is all borrowed; but I shall think it will be enough for my credit, if I have not deviated from the truth, and if I have reached it in the common road or in a less frequented path. Now if any one shall censure me, as being altogether in the wrong, I shall not at all wonder at it, as one unacquainted with the temper of some men. I shall not however be incensed against him, or wish him any ill, or detract from his reputation. I have herein acted according to the best of my understanding for our common Saviour; and if not so well as I should have done, yet at least sincerely: nor have I writ one syllable but what flowed from the love of truth or the Gospel: to which if any others

think they can do better service another way, I shall be far from opposing of it, provided they observe the plain precepts of the Gospel, and assent to those tenets which are uncontroverted amongst Christians."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

Years of
the Julian
Period.

4674. JUNE, JULY, &c.—The 184th Olympiad ends. Herod nominated to the Kingdom of Judea by the Roman Senate.

4709. MARCH TO JUNE.—A decree having been issued by “Cæsar Augustus, that all the land should be taxed, all went to be taxed every one to his own city,” and, as Josephus says, “All the Jewish nation took an oath to be faithful to Cæsar, and to the interests of the King.” Joseph also with his espoused wife Mary went up to Bethlehem, and there JESUS WAS BORN.

FROM THE 39th TO THE 42d DAY AFTER THE BIRTH OF JESUS.—Magi from the East arrive in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” Herod holds a consultation “with the chief Priests and Scribes of the People.” Jesus is brought to Jerusalem and presented in the temple, and then carried back again to Bethlehem, 6 miles. The Magi are sent by Herod to Bethlehem “to search diligently for the young Child.” The Magi arrive in Bethlehem, find Jesus, present their offerings, and then, “being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they returned into their own country by another way.” The same night Joseph, being also warned by God in a dream, “took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.”

	42d TO THE 50th DAY AFTER THE BIRTH OF JESUS.—The Murder of the Innocents at Bethlehem.
4710.	FEBRUARY.—The last illness of Herod probably commenced. MARCH 13th.—The Rabbis put to death for sedition. "The same night there was an eclipse of the Moon."
4711.	FEBRUARY.—About this time <i>Herod died</i> , in the 37th year of his reign, and not quite two years after our Saviour's birth. He was succeeded in the kingdom of Judea by his son Archelaus. MARCH 16th.—The first Jewish month Nisan and the 2d year of Archelaus's reign, according to the Jewish method of computation, begin.
4719.	FEBRUARY.—The ninth year of Archelaus's reign, according to the Roman and common method of computation, begins. MARCH OR APRIL.—The first Jewish month Nisan, and the tenth year of Archelaus's reign, according to the Jewish method of computation, begin.
	SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER.—Archelaus was banished in the ninth Roman and tenth Jewish year of his reign.
4720.	JANUARY TO APRIL.—Cyrenius appointed Governor of Judea, and ordered to make a general Assessment. SEPTEMBER 2d.—Cyrenius had before this finished the general Assessment in Judea.
4724.	NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER.—A decree of the Roman Senate conferred upon Tiberius equal power with Augustus in the Armies and Provinces, from which period is to be dated the <i>Ἡγεμονία</i> or <i>Government</i> , or Proconsular Empire of Tiberius.

4727. AUGUST 19th.—Augustus dies, and the *Βασιλεία* or *Ἀρχή*, or *reign*, or sole Empire of Tiberius begins.
4738. NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER.—The 15th year of the *Ἡγεμονία* or Government of Tiberius begins.
4739. JANUARY TO MAY.—Pontius Pilate became Governor of Judea before the Jewish Passover.
MAY TO OCTOBER.—The Word of God came to John the Baptist, and he began to baptize.
NOVEMBER.—JESUS BAPTIZED by John.
NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER.—The 15th year of the *Ἡγεμονία* or Government of Tiberius ends.
4740. MARCH, APRIL.—The first Passover in our Saviour's Ministry.
4741. MARCH, APRIL.—The second Passover in our Saviour's Ministry.
AUGUST 19th.—The 15th year of the reign or sole empire of Tiberius begins.
4742. Our Blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST was CRUCIFIED at Jerusalem by the Jews, at the third Passover in his Ministry, which lasted on the whole about two years and a half, viz. from November J. P. 4739 to March or April J. P. 4742.
AUGUST 19th.—The fifteenth year of the reign or sole empire of Tiberius ends.
4749. JANUARY TO MAY.—Pontius Pilate removed from the Government of Judea, having held it for ten years, viz. from the beginning of J. P. 4739.
Vitellius, President of Syria, went up to Jerusalem, at the time of the Passover, and there deposed the High Priest Joseph, &c.
MAY AND JUNE.—Tiberius sends letters to

4750.

Vitellius, commanding him to form a friendly alliance with Artabanus king of the Parthians.

JUNE AND JULY.—Vitellius enters into a Treaty with Artabanus, and sends dispatches to Tiberius announcing the fact and the terms.

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER.—Tiberius in answering the dispatches of Vitellius informs him that he had previously been made acquainted with all the circumstances.

Herod sends to Tiberius an account of a dispute between himself and Aretas king of Arabia Petræa.

NOVEMBER, DECEMBER.—Vitellius receives orders from Tiberius to make war upon Aretas.

MARCH 16th.—The Emperor Tiberius dies.

APRIL TO JULY.—Vitellius, on his March against Aretas, goes up to Jerusalem, “a feast of the Jews being at hand,” and there on the fourth day after his arrival receives intelligence of the death of Tiberius.



*A List of the principal Works and Editions of Works
quoted or referred to in the preceding pages.*

- Allix de Christi anno et mense natali. 8vo. 1707.
 Clementis Alexandrini Opera. edit. Potteri. fol. Oxon. 1715.
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 Cotelerii Patres Apostolici. Antverp. 1700.
 Cypriani Opera, 1 vol. folio. Amstelod. 1691.
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 Epiphaniï Opera. edit. Petavii Parisiis, 1622.
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 Justini Martyris Apologiæ et Dial. cum Tryphone. edit. Thirlbii.
 Lond. 1722.
 Josephi Opera. fol. Genevæ 1635.
 Lamy Commentarius et Apparatus in Harmon. Paris. 4to. 1699.
 Lardner's Works, 8vo. edition by Kippis.
 Maimonides de Consecratione Calendarum Latinè. Lond. 4to.
 1683.
 Mann. de veris annis D. N. Jesus Christi natali et mortuali Dis-
 sertationes. 8vo. Lond. 1742.
 Origenis contra Celsum Libri 8. &c. edit. Spenceri Cantab.
 1677.
 Petavius de Doctrinâ Temporum, 2 Vols. fol. Paris, 1627.
 Pagi. Appar. et Critic. ad Baronium. 5 Vols. fol.
 Surenhusii Mischna.
 Scaliger de Emendatione Temporum.
 Tertulliani Opera, 1 Vol. folio. Paris, 1616.
 Vossius de Mense, dieque natali Christi et de Tempor. Domin.
 Passionis. fol. in the 5th Vol. of his Works.
 Whiston's Chronology and Harmony. 4to. Camb. 1702.

ERRATA ET CORRIGENDA.

Page 3 line 26, *for contrarities read contrarieties.*

— 9 — 10, *for these read those.*

— 19 — 15, instead of a comma place a period after "Syria."

— 20 — 30, *for Rodm read Proëm.*

— 49 — 27, *for Elul read Schebat.*

— 61 — 26, *for term read tense.*

— 73 — 21, *for it her read in her.*

— 88 — 7, *dele and scrupulosity.*

— 147 — 16, *for shewed read shewn.*

— 150 — 2, *after connected insert with.*

— 192 — 5, *for Narva read Nerva.*

— 196 — 22, *for contrarities read contrarieties.*

— 243 — 10, *dele Tatian and.*

— 246 — 29, *for agreed read argued.*

— 248 — 26, *for ensusing read ensuing.*

— 250 — 10, *dele he.*

— 252 — 6, *for defeat read defect.*

— 253 — 5, *for axactly read exactly.*

— 254 — 14, *for probable read probably.*

— 255 — 28, *for Syker's read Sykes's.*

— 257 — 3, *for ground read grounds.*

— 262 — 24, *for remove read obviate.*

— 266 — 7, *dele therefore.*

— 303 — 13, *for have read has.*

— 310 — 13, *for videlicet read videlicet.*

— 318 — 7 and 8. *for beginning read conclusion.*

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